

**CODE-SWITCHING IN THE UNIVERSITY
LEVEL STUDENTS OF BANGLADESH:
AN EMPIRICAL STUDY**



Linguistics

Keywords: Bilingualism, communication, code-mixing, conversation, European Culture.

Ruhul Amin

Lecturer and Head (i/c), Department of English. NPI University of Bangladesh.

Abstract

The motto of this research article is to present how Bangladeshi University students use the mixture of both English and Bengali language as their spoken language. It can be said undoubtedly that English is the vast spoken language in the whole world as well as spreading to a large extent. Bangladesh is not different from other countries as well as English has been taught every level an every medium of education here and in recent times it is seen that English is used by the university students when they talk with each other I mean we can see a mixture of two languages. Each language has a social function which no other language could possibly fulfill (Hudson, 1996). Perhaps that is why code switching has become a common phenomenon in our everyday conversations in the recent years in Bangladesh. Young people randomly style switch in their daily interactions. This research paper also explores the possible propelling factors as well as stereotypical patterns behind this scenario. The data collected for the study reveals different factors as the causes behind this practice of code-switching and its impact on language behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Code switching is a predictable outcome of bilingualism (Hudson, 1996). It seems that Bangladesh is a monolingual country with a splendid language history. But by the remarkable influence of globalization and the technological development, it has been going to become a bilingual country. Banu & Sussex, 2001, found that “Bengali and English are used simultaneously especially at the educational institutions in Bangladesh”. As a result, the habit of simultaneous code switching of Bengali & English is very common for the students such as the students of English Department at private universities in Dhaka. Many associate this with social strata, prestige culture, and cross-cultural image. Thus students sometimes unconsciously and sometimes consciously mix different languages or varieties of a language in their conversations. Often, they switch one language to another or sometimes they mix some words of different languages like English or Hindi for the purpose of communication. European languages, literature, and culture spread all over the globe (Amin, M 2019). They share different insights for the occurrence of code switching. Some students of English Department at a university stress that English code switching facilitate communication by enriching it where most of the students explain that they use Hindi only for making fun.

According to some other students, they are motivated to speak English fluently by their teachers in the classroom. However, most of the times they fail to do so due to their poor level of linguistic competence and more specifically their lack of appropriate vocabulary treasure. As a result, they take refuge in either code switching or code-mixing. Majority students state that when they are in informal situation, there is a general inclination for mixing both Bengali and English & sometimes Hindi in their conversation. This tendency affects their normal language usage and leads them to form a habit of code switching in their everyday conversation. This study mainly

tries to determine predominant patterns and trend of code switching among the students of English Department in the campus context. It also presents the impact of code switching on language behavior and their attitude and insights towards this linguistic phenomenon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this existing globalized and multilingual world code-switching is a very extensive incident. In the light of researchers and text writers whose books are broadly included as texts for university study, we find the following definitions and causes behind code-switching landscape:

According to Meyerhoff (2013), in its original representation code-switching means “the alteration between varieties, or codes, across sentences or clause boundaries”. She initially focuses on more general causes leading to code shifting phenomenon which are where the communicators are, who they are conversing with and what kind of impression or persona they would like to build on converser. Later on, she more precisely indexes a few important and frequent reasons signaling in-group humor and affection, emerging solidarity and identity, features of local or close conversation.

Janet Holmes stresses that code-switching commands complex set of skills as it functions like those of figures of speech specifically like metaphors to enrich communication. She reinforces incompetence as one of the strongest causes which lead to language-switching or more categorically to “the symbolic or social meanings of the two codes” by switching between two or more codes, the speakers convey affective meaning as well as information.(2001,P.42)

Mixing codes are viewed as a hybridization which involves graphology where such hybrid varieties are now in a complex situation with our national language policy. (Banu & Sussex, 2001)

Spolsky (1998) opines bilinguals tend to switch codes often in an ongoing conversation. This shift is random and hence can occur between or even within sentences. He identified convenience and social relations are vital reasons behind this shifting. Shuffling phrase or word related to topic or kind of bond or association with the interlocutor functions as crucial catalysts in the frequent occurrence of style-switch.

Hudson (1996) explains the term ‘code switching’ is preferred to ‘codemixing’ in order to accommodate other kinds of variety: dialects and registers. (P.52)

Wardhaugh (1992) believes code-switching is a spontaneous and often subconscious phenomenon. After any conversation speakers can hardly reflect on any changing code precisely. It’s a natural random outcome. (P.107). However, Trudgill (2000) contradicted with this view by pointing out that “speakers are not sociolinguistic automata. They do not just respond automatically to situations”. To him, people can deliberately resort in style shifting “to manipulate or influence or define the situation as they wish, and to convey nuances of meaning and personal intention”. However, with “subconscious” description he echoes....more intimate and confidential. Though cannot be determined by the social situation. (P.105-106)

According to Richards et al (1985) “Code switching can occur when a speaker starts its conversion in a language, and then changes it to another language in the middle of the speech to enrich the conversation”. (P.43)

Amin, R (2018) found that student’s can learn many English words, expressions, sentences from elders in their family frequently use English with Bengali. When they continue this practice that would help them to pick up new words in an easy manner.

According to Gumperz (1982) “code switching is juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems”

Lin (2013) & Alenezi (2010) on classroom style-switching, Obidullah (2016) & Chowdhury (2012) on EFL classroom language-switching and attitude towards this socio and sociolinguistics phenomenon, (Banu & Sussex, 2001) landed with the first significant work on code-mixing and language hybridization which essentially viewed this aspect negatively, Alam (2006) indexed a couple of reasons behind language-switching situation however in the context of non-government white-collar job-holders. Given in the research situations, this paper has figured out the gap of urban university students’ interactions and their nature and typical pattern of code-switching.

TYPES OF CODE SWITCHING

Wardhaugh (1992) identified two types of code-switching namely situational and metaphorical code-switching (P.105-107). Whereas Spolsky (1998, P.4950), Janet Holmes (2001, P.34-42) and Meyerhoff (2013, P. 125-128) focused on more comprehensive list of language-switching; Intra-word, Intrasentential, Inter-sentential and Tag-switching. Brief discussion is followed by some examples in the following:

1. Tag switching: This type of switching happens when one word from a different language is added in the end of the sentence as a tag form.

- For example, his performance was excellent yesterday. tai na? (wasn’t it?)
- We will meet next Sunday. thik ase? (Ok?)

2. Intra-word switching: It occurs with a word boundary such as a morpheme boundary. It can be two types:

a) English root word, Bengali suffix:

- For example, /idea-ta/ (article), /support-tai/ (emphatic), relationship-er (possessive); /reception-e/ (preposition), /cup-gula/ (plural). Here Bengali inflections have been used with English words.

b) Bengali root word English suffix:

In the word /bhabist (the meaning is moody) the combination is made by the use of Bengali abstract noun bhab (mood) with English suffix(ist). This kind of mixing is a vogue among the younger generation.

3. Inter-sentential switching: This type of code switching occurs outside the clause and sentence boundary. It is sometimes called extra sentential switching. Here the switching occurs after a sentence in the first language has been completed and the next sentence starts with a new language. For example, where had you been last night? Amra tomake khujechilam. (We were looking for you.)

* Stop writing. Somoy sesh. (Time is up).

4. Intra-sentential switching: This switching occurs within a sentence or a clause (inserting English word or phrase in Bengali sentences or utterances.)

For example:

* Tomake promise korte hobe je tumi agamikal asbe. (You have to promise that you will come tomorrow).

* Amader exam routine publish hoyese. (Our exam routine has been published).

Research Questions

Through this research, the researchers will attempt to find out possible answers to the following questions:

1. What are the causes behind code-switching scenario by the city university students?
2. What are the students' perspectives about this hybridization and subsequent impact on language behavior?

Hypotheses Development

To find out the appropriate answers to the above mentioned questions, it is necessary to develop hypotheses and compare these hypotheses with primary data.

H1. Code switching smoothes communication processes spontaneous and effortless.

H2. It happens due to obvious lacks of desirable proficiency of either of the language involved or both.

H3. Despite students understanding and identification of this sociolinguistic behavior as negative, they have a preference for it especially for friendly chats and informal interactions.

Significance of the Study

This study focuses on university students' perceptions on this sociolinguistic landscape code-switching and eventual repertoire of the impacts due to this language behavior. It intends to contribute in this arena of research so that some major work might find the platform for generalization. Young people always have a tendency to adopt new style of language to sound smart, confident and stylish. This research will show how university students are changing their style of speaking as a result of code-switching and code mixing. It presents an insight of students' perspective on the effects of code switching on Bengali language which will leave a ground and a guideline for future research work on the same topic.

METHODOLOGY

To illustrate the patterns and to find out the causes of code switching of the students the following sociolinguistics tools have been adopted:

Questionnaire method

To conduct this research each of the respondents has been asked to fill up an elaborate questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to the students only after a brief introductory talk in which the completion procedure was explained to the students.

Interview method

In this method the respondents have been asked to talk about their family members, their aim in life, their view on particular current affairs, their food habit, favorite program on television, their favorite place for vacation and such like and their narrations have been recorded.

Observation method

In order to overcome the shortcomings of questionnaire method, close observation of the students has contributed a lot to explain the phenomenon.

Participants

In order to collect data for this study 30 (15 male and 15 female) students are chosen for the questionnaire survey from the Department of English at a private university in Dhaka. Besides, separately 10 more students from the same department are selected for the one to one interview for generating qualitative data. For the selection, personal rapport with researchers, willingness to help with honest feedback has come into play as a determinant. Subjects of this research approximately fall into the category of (18-23) years of age group.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

At first, student's questionnaires have been verified (close-ended part) by counting their opinions and tables and pie chart are used to show the percentage of responses in findings part. Then the total findings of the students' questionnaires (of both open-ended and close-ended questions) are discussed and analyzed in descriptive manner one after another. This part is quantitative and qualitative in nature. The whole data analysis procedure is based on the theoretical frame work part to find out the answers of the central research questions.

Findings from the Questionnaire

The students who participated in this study came from private universities. A total number of 30 students participated in the study, comprising 15 males and 15 females. The students' views about code switching have been collected from the questionnaire consisting of 9 questions. On each question students indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements related to code switching. Also an interview has been taken with 10 students to collect their opinions more deeply.

FINDINGS

1. How many languages do you speak well?

Option	Female	Male	Total
One	3 (20%)	2 (13.33%)	5 (16.67%)
Two	12 (80%)	8 (53.33%)	20 (66.67%)
More than two	0%	5 (33.33%)	5 (16.67%)

Table 1

Table (1) displays the student's responses (which are converted into percentage for the purpose of the study) towards how many languages they speak well. From the table above it is clear, (16.67%) students' can speak one language and (66.67%) can speak well in two languages and (16.67%) can speak well in more than two languages. This table also shows that (13.33%) of 15 students are male and 20% of 15 students are female who speak well in one language. (53.33%) of 15 students are male and 80% of 15 students are female who can speak well in two languages. Besides, (33.33%) of 15 students are male who say that they can speak well in more than two languages where the percentage of female student is 0%.

2. Do you mix codes because you do not know the appropriate meaning?

Option	Female	Male	Total
Yes	8 (53.33%)	7 (46.67%)	15 (50%)
No	7 (46.67%)	8 (53.33%)	15 (50%)
Others	0%	0%	0%

Table 2

Table (2) shows that 50% learners say that they mix code because they do not know the appropriate meaning. Among them (53.33%) of 15 students are female and (46.67%) of 15 students are male. This table also shows that the rest of 50% students among 30 say, no when they were asked for the same question. Among them (46.67%) of 15 students are female and (53.33%) of 15 students are male. 0% students share other reasons for code mixing.

3. Do you mix English words because of not readily having right equivalence in your mother tongue?

Option	Female	Male	Total
Yes	11 (73.33%)	9 (60%)	20 (66.67%)
No	4 (26.67%)	6 (40%)	10 (33.33%)
Others	0%	0%	0%

Table 3

Table (3) reflects, total (66.67%) among 30 students' agree that they mix English words because they tend to struggle to find suitable equivalent Bengali words. Among them (73.33%) of 15 students are female and 60% of 15 students are male. But total (33.33%) students out of 30, disagree that they mix English words because of the right word in their first language. Among them (26.67%) of 15 students are female and (40%) of 15 students are male.

4. Do you think code switching interfere natural flow of conversation?

Option	Female	Male	Total
Yes	7 (46.67%)	6 (40%)	13 (43.33%)
No	8 (53.33%)	9 (60%)	17 (56.67%)
Others	0%	0%	0%

Table 4

Table (4) shows that total 53.33% think that code switching is some kind of interference. Among them (49.67%) of 15 students are female and 40% of 15 students are male who have the same opinion. But the rest of the students among 30 do not think code switching in the light of interference at least from the view of fluency in one language. The percentage is (56.67%). Among them (53.33%) of 15 students are female and 60% of 15 students are male.

5. From the effortless communication perspective do you think code switching is effective?

Option	Female	Male	Total
Yes	10 (66.67%)	10 (66.67%)	20 (66.67%)
No	5 (33.33%)	5 (33.33%)	10 (33.33%)
Others	0%	0%	0%

Table 5

Table (5) displays that total (66.67%) agree with the concept that codeswitching helps communicating exact meaning. Among them (66.67%) of 15 female students and (66.67%) of 15 male students say yes, it is effective. But 33.33% say no, it is ineffective from the view of accuracy. This table also shows (33.33%) of 15 female and (33.33%) of 15 male students do not agree that code switching is effective.

6. Does the mixture of Bengali and English have any impact on language behavior?

Option	Female	Male	Total
Yes	12 (80%)	14 (93.33%)	26 (86.67%)
No	3 (20%)	1 (6.67%)	4 (13.33%)
Others	0%	0%	0%

Table 6

This table shows that 86.67% answered positively. Code switching has many impacts on language behavior 13.33% student answered negative; it has no influence on language behavior. This table also shows that among the 15 female and 15 male students 80% female and (86.67%) male students think code switching has impact on language behavior. But 20% female and 6.67% male students think, it has no impact on language behavior.

7. Which language the students prefer most between Hindi and English for code switching?

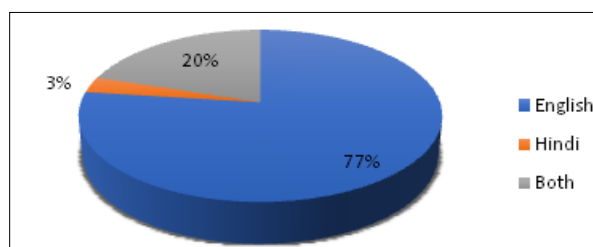


Figure: Pie chart

This chart describes that 77 % students say that they prefer English while they switch code. 20% students use both English and Hindi for code switching and the rest of 3 % students use only Hindi for switching their code.

Grounds for choosing English instead of Hindi, some are given below

- (1) I can't explain my speech properly in Hindi. So I prefer English – Moosa Amin.
- (2) To avoid humiliation of friends - Mustakim.
- (3) We are used to it - Mamun & Mukta.
- (4) For increasing the fluency in English I prefer to use English - Salehin
- (5) English is easier than Hindi - Mehrab.
- (6) I don't feel any necessity of Practice in Hindi for communication. That's why prefer English - Maheer.
- (7) I don't like Hindi so use English instead of Hindi – Haroon Amin.
- (8) Hindi is not acceptable all over the world where English is a established language in world wide. So why should I go for Hindi? - Sohel.
- (9) To enrich the conversation I use English – Umme Habiba.
- (10) I am a student of English literature, so being influenced by my teachers and seniors to speak in English instead of Hindi - Maymuna.

Opting for opposite and justifications. Some real examples are as follows.

- (1) I prefer Hindi when I use slang in my friend circle. - Taskin.
 - (2) To spread Hindi as one of my favorite languages. - Afifa.
 - (3) For doing fun nothing else – Ayesha.
 - (4) I am more comfortable in Hindi than English - Hridoy.
 - (5) Actually influenced by Hindi Movies – Rehana
- [N.B.: Names that have been used here are Pseudonyms.]

8. What kind of switching the students do while switching to Hindi from Bengali?

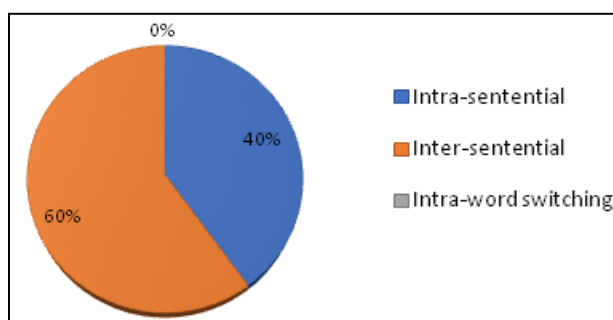


Figure: Pie chart

This chart describes that 60% students use inter-sentential code switching and 40% students use intra-sentential code switching where the user of intra-word switching is 0%.

Examples of Inter-sentential code switching

- (1) Phone kothay tomar ? Kitni bar call keya.
- (2) Mujhe mat Pucho. Ami asob Kisue Jani na.
- (3) Abbe sale, kaha thi tu ? Kokhon theke khuje beracchi.
- (4) kiski payer me kho gaya tu ? oy sundoni tomar hobe na bondhu.
- (5) Class khatam ho gaya billo Rani! Akhon cholo basay jai.

Examples of Intra sentential code switching in Hindi

- (1) Ji nehi. Tumi boley ki ami sunbo? Kavi nehi.
 - (2) Tomar matlab ki? Etna sara valo valo kotha bolcho ? Age to bolta na.
 - (3) Pata nehi koi chole gese. khuje pacchi na.
 - (4) Tumito onek ganda kaj korecho. Thik hoyeni.
 - (5) Sumona ke na pele me mar jaungi. O na thakle mere jan ka kono mullo nai.
- [N.B.: Names that have been used here are Pseudonyms.]

9. What kind of switching the students used while switching from English to Bengali?

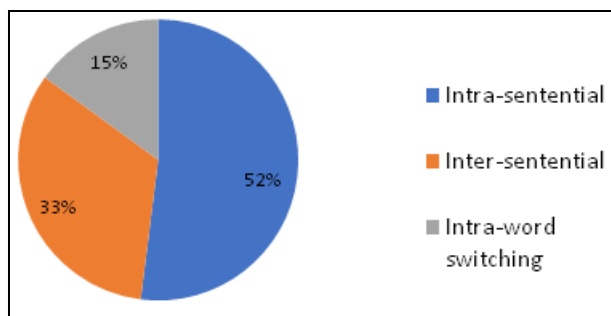


Figure: Pie chart

This chart shows that among 30 students 52% students use intra-sentential code switching. 33% students use inter-sentential code switching and 15% students use intra word switching.

Examples of Intra sentential code switching

- (1) Amar valo lagche na. paye khub pain hocche.
- (2) Gotokal class e aschila?
- (3) Lift (escalator) pele ar siri stair deye jabo na. Onek tired lagche.
- (4) Amito regular e library te jai.
- (5) Khub sick lagchy. mone hoy exam dite parbo na. Basay chole jabo.

Example of Inter-sentential code switching:

- (1) Sokal thekey sorir valo na. Tobu porikkha delam. That was one of the worst exams of my life.
- (2) Uff! Rasta-Ghat er je obostha ! It's so abominable nowadays.
- (3) What the hell are you ? Amar onumoti chara amar jinis ken niccho?
- (4) How dare you to talk to me like this? Tumi obossoi amar sathe evabe kotha bolte paro na.
- (5) It's so tough for me. Ami korte parbo na.

Example of intra-word code switching:

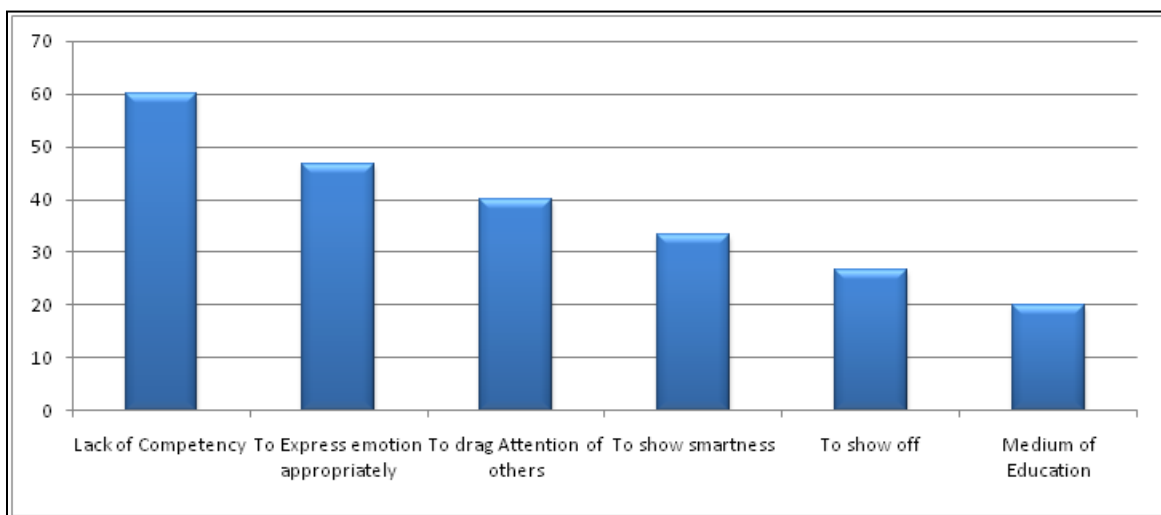
- (1) file - ta dao.
- (2) Pen-ta dao.
- (3) Exam-e koto paiso ?
- (4) watch - gulo onek sundor.
- (5) Light-ta jalao

Reasons for code Switching

Findings:

The data found from the questionnaire and recorded interviews are analyzed carefully and the possible reasons of code switching that surface are in the following:

- a) Uncertain about linguistic & communicative competence (60%)
- b) To draw attention of others (40%)
- c) Medium of education (20%)
- d) To brag around (33.33%)
- e) To hold oneself high (26.67%)
- f) To express emotion effortlessly, comfortably and more accurately (46.67%).
- g) To make fun of.



LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is conducted among only the students of English Department at a private university in Dhaka. Although there are some other departments in the university, it is not possible to make contact with the students of those departments because of time constraints and not having close connection. Moreover for qualitative data are derived only from ten students from the whole Department of English. As students are not interested to answer open ended questions and tend to be comfortable with multiple choice items, it is not possible to take interview of more students. This limits the degree to which any generalizations could be drawn.

Moreover, in many cases, the information provided by the respondents in the questionnaires do not match with the information gathered from the observation of their language behavior, for example, most of the students have reiterated that they can speak well in two

languages and they are fluent in both Bengali and English, they seemed to have exaggerated their language alternation skills and level of bilingualism.

Comments of some students in the Questionnaire

(1) Sometimes it helps me to represent myself confident in front of the teachers and junior fellow. The speaker is Rancy Prianka Costa.

Example: (a).Ma'am I hope u know, porasunar pasapasi, I have started a boutique shop. I'll be very happy if you come to visit my shop. Dress er besh kichu collection ache. Asa korchhi, u'll like it. **(b)**Tomake main text porte hobe. Otherwise it will be really tough for you to achieve good result.

(2) I feel easy and comfortable in conversation by mixing two languages. The speaker is Sabrina Ferdousi Dina, a student of final semester in BA (Hon's) in English.

Example: Gotokal basay guest chillo. That's why, class e aste pareni. (There were visitors in my house yesterday. That's why I couldn't come to the class.)

(3) We should speak in one language especially we should use our mother tongue during conversation. Mixing of bangle and English is a kind of insult for both languages. According to my point of view. The speaker is Awolad Anik, a final year student of BA (Hon's) in English.

Example: We can't mix our national anthem to different language. Each book is written only in only language, ether Bengali or English or any other language. So it's clear that sometimes, mixing Bengali and English during conversation is nothing but exaggeration of accomplishment for both languages.

(4) We should speak only in English at the campus because we are the students of English literature. But sometimes code switching helps to enrich a speech to express it more transparently. The speaker is Mehedi Hasan, the student of 4th semester in BA (Hon's) in English.

Example: Ma'am, your lecture sheets what you provided us was excellent and undoubtedly helpful. But sobgulo point mone rakhte parchi na. Ma'am can u please help me to get rid of this problem?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Alenezi (2010) reiterates that within the world of languages use, code-switching has often been perceived as being of lower status, a strategy used by weak language performers to compensate for language deficiency. (Banu & Sussex, 2001) reinforces that ‘Banglish’ context of interaction obviously has its negative impacts on the language.

Even in this research some students claim that they are getting confused about both language through mixing Bengali and English and sometimes Bengali with Hindi. Hence, this is not any more a mere stigma rather it overshadows learning before breaking, linguistic cosmic symphony.

While some students demonstrate code-switching help emerge them as effective communicators by not only performing some vital social and pragmatic functions, but also by being the symbol of status quo. Code switching is a verbal action in a conversation event which is quite natural among the bilingual young urban communicators and very effective to enrich a conversation. Code switching is popular among the students during informal situation as it avoids defining the social situation in terms of either language or culture. Switching may also occur as a result of linguistic habit. Nowadays the popularity of code switching is increasing because it is a dynamic strategy of language phenomenon; we can grasp new vocabulary from a foreign language. We can build a highly effective communication skill by code switching which is very important. But we must have to be very aware of the excessive and unnecessary use of it. Otherwise, it can be considered as a reason of language pollution.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that urban university student populations prefer English to Hindi code-switching. Their typical on campus code switching spectrum upholds that with English, they randomly switch style of all four types Intra word, sentence to inter-sentential. However, intra-word Hindi language-shifting example is rarely identified which in turn also illuminates not only their less proficiency in Hindi but also less dominant choice. This research has come up with another new finding which is for “making fun” learner-populations sometimes resort to language-switching. Rest of the reasons, at least some of them we came across in similar research, for example in Alam’s (2006) project. Despite students obvious awareness of an ominous foreboding lurks of adverse consequence of this funny and stylish code-switching on our first language they have definite preference for codeswitching - an unwelcoming paradox. It is undeniable that code-switching has close associations or links with multicultural and prestige identity, could prove a suitable alternative and communicative device for urban university interlocutors, overuse may result in undesired catastrophe for freshness, aura of originality and uniqueness of Bengali language. To preserve the authenticity of any language, some kind of monitoring, foreseeing, control apart from motivation is to be practiced. (Banu & Sussex, 2001) first coined the term “Banglish” to label Bangla and English style-switch, since then, it has

become a common word in literature. Following them “Bangdi” is coming into being to suggest Bangla and Hindi languageswitch. In the coming decades, we cannot let these precarious concepts and communicative tools to flourish and boom to continue to be the cause of broken language picture rather next generation of speakers should gradually limit this and devote more on using one language at a time through creativity, innovation, love and respect for their own culture, and language which is certainly a home of elegance and sophistication compared to hybridization and code-switching.

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