



A Pragmatic Analysis of Urdu–English Code-Switching in Pakistani Professional Discourse: A Study within Speech Act Theory and Grice’s Cooperative Principle

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Abstract

The current research is an exploration of pragmatic roles of code switching in Urdu–English in Pakistani professional discourse in the context of Speech Act theory and Grice’s Cooperative principle. The use of code switching is an in-depth communicative tool in the workplace environment, which has not been sufficiently explored in Pakistan from the sociolinguistic and identity perspective. The method used in this research is a qualitative discursive analytic method and the data used is the naturally occurring professional conversation and semi-structured interviews that were recorded in Lahore for about 8 hours. Data were transcribed and analysed for patterns of inter-sentential and intra-sentential code switching and its interaction with speech acts and conversational maxims. The results show that code switching is used strategically to achieve illocutionary changes, politeness, assert authority and create conversational implicatures. Urdu is mostly employed to soften statements and to promote interpersonal relations, while English is linked to accuracy, formality, and institutional power. The study shows bilingual professionals skillfully and creatively uses linguistic resources to improve communicative efficiency. The study combines theoretical approaches from the classical pragmatics and bilingual discourse analysis to better understand pragmatic competence in a multilingual professional context.

Keywords: Code-Switching, Pragmatics, Speech Acts, Gricean Maxims, Professional Discourse, Bilingualism

Introduction

Language is more than a set of grammar rules: it is a tool that speakers use to enact action, to interact with others, and to create a social world. This pragmatic aspect of language is especially relevant when the language user lives in a multilingual society, where he or she has several language codes and can switch between them in one language situation. Within this context, meaning is not only expressed in the message, but also in the language of the message. In Pakistan Urdu and English languages coexist in a variety of ways in institutional, educational and professional settings. Urdu is more of a medium of communication for daily life and social cohesion, whereas English is given a high status and is deeply linked to formal communication, administration and business communication. A dual linguistic system has resulted in the common use of Urdu–English code-switching, especially in the urban working sphere like Lahore. In such contexts, bilinguals often switch between languages in a

systematic and contextually meaningful manner. Previous studies on code switching in Pakistan have exclusively studied the sociolinguistic aspects such as language ideology, language power and identity construction (Rahman, 1996). Such research will give insight into the macro-level social functions of code-switching but neglect to describe the pragmatic mechanisms which are at the micro-level and by which a speaker switches codes in order to reach a communicative objective in a professional interaction. Specifically, there is little research that focuses on the role that code-switching plays in the realization of speech acts and the interaction between the code switching and conversational principles and maxims suggested by Grice (1975). Language is seen as an action from the pragmatic standpoint. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) in their Speech Act Theory view the utterance as a function such as requesting or asserting or promising. Likewise, Grice's Cooperative Principle offers a way to understand how speakers create meaning by following or violating conversational maxims. These theories have been widely used in monolingual discourse but are not yet so well implemented in bilingual discourse, especially in the professional context. This research is aimed at filling this void as it will analyze Urdu-English code switching in Pakistani professional discourse based on the framework of Speech Act Theory and Grice's Cooperative Principle. It states that code switching is not incidental or random but a strategy employed to control illocutionary force, interpersonal relations, and to create inferred meanings. The main argument of this study is that code switching in Urdu-English in Pakistani professional communication is a pragmatic strategy which helps to increase the effectiveness of speech acts and allows the speaker to pragmatically observe, manipulate or flout the Gricean maxims to attain the communicative goals. This study will explore naturally occurring interactions in the workplace to offer a detailed description of the use of linguistic resources by bilingual professionals in context-specific ways.

Literature Review

A major twentieth-century development in the study of language was the rejection of structural analyses of language in favour of studies of language in action and context. Austin (1962) has helped to bring about this change by putting forward the challenge to the traditional idea that language itself is a representation of reality. Rather, he suggested that utterances act, which resulted in the concept of the difference between the locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the perlocutionary act. This model was the basis for today's pragmatics theory which focused on the importance of intention of the speaker and context as determinants of meaning, not just the form of the language. Austin's work was continued by Searle (1969) who introduced a comprehensive classification of illocutionary acts: Assertives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives and Declarations. His model has proven to be very significant in the analysis of institutional discourse, in which language is used for specific purposes like giving instructions, making commitments, expressing evaluations, etc. Both Austin and Searle, however, created their theories in monolingual environments that did not account for speakers' multilingualism, meaning that their theories are questions of how they might play out in a multilingual context. In addition to Speech Act Theory, Grice (1975) also developed the Cooperative Principle, which states that good communication involves four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. The model was a great extension of pragmatics, because it also included the concept of implicature, or implied meaning, that occurs when speakers intentionally breach or exceed these maxims. The use of Cooperative Principle in the analysis of discourse has been heavily developed, but its relationship with bilingual practices like code switching is not well-studied and especially in professional discourse. In the 1960s and 1970s, the area of study of language took another turn with the rise of sociolinguistics, which added social and contextual elements to the study of language. Hymes (1972) added the idea of communicative competence, which focuses on the fact that the use of language is more than grammatical correctness; it is the use of language in the proper social setting. Likewise, Gumperz (1982) showed that code switching is an "interpersonal marker" or "contextualization cue" that allows the speaker to mark changes in

meaning, interpersonal attitude, and/or discourse structure. His work emphasizes the fact that code switching is not just a structural phenomenon but an important tool in the negotiation of meaning.

Poplack's (1980) analysis from a structural point of view was among the earliest systematic analyses of code switching to differentiate between inter-sentential and intra-sentential code switching and to illustrate the grammatical constraints that govern bilingual alternation. In this work, the randomness and linguistic inferiority of code switching were challenged. Pragmatic motivations for alternation in interaction, however, cannot be fully explained in terms of structural regularities, as is possible in Poplack's model. The Markedness Model (MS, 1993) was a significant development in the study of code-switching, representing a shift in understanding to see language choice as a strategic move that allows the code-switch to negotiate social relations, rights and obligations. This model proposes that speakers choose their linguistic codes depending on the norms of interaction that are expected of them, and that they use marked or unmarked codes in order to comply or criticize the norms of interaction. It is a framework that includes an important functional dimension, but which is mostly about social negotiation and not about the detailed pragmatic mechanisms that lead to the actual construction of meaning in discourse. Rahman (1996) in the Pakistani context discussed the political and ideological aspects of language use, noting that English is linked with power, prestige and institutional authority, and Urdu is linked with the national identity and social solidarity. His contribution is extremely useful to understand the macro level dynamics of bilingualism in Pakistan. It does not, however, offer insight into the role of these language choices at the micro level of everyday professional discourse, in relation to the pragmatic processes of speech acts and implicature. Studies in South Asian contexts that have occurred more recently have focused on code-switching in the context of education, media discourse, and digital communication (Malik, 2015; Rafi, 2012). The studies show that code-switching has several communicative purposes such as emphatic, clarificatory and identity-building purposes. But they rarely have a systematic incorporation of the classical pragmatic theories, so that they cannot explain the role of code-switching in the realization of speech acts or the production of implicature during interaction. Studies of workplace discourse have also highlighted the significance of language in interpersonal relations and roles within institutions. For instance, Holmes and Stubbe (2015) emphasize that workplace communication involves "transactional" and "relational" goals. Their work offers useful information on professional interaction but is mainly limited to monolingual English-speaking settings and fails to consider the added complexity of bilingual language use. The current literature therefore highlights a clear gap. Although there is much work in the fields of Speech Act Theory, the Cooperative Principle, and code-switching on meaning in interaction and in the fields of structural and sociolinguistic study, respectively, there is a lack of research which brings these together and which looks at bilingual professional discourse. In particular, Urdu-English code switching in terms of illocutionary force and interaction with maxims of Grice is still less studied. To fill this gap, this study aims to combine the findings of the pragmatics and sociolinguistics and analyze the naturally occurring professional interactions in Lahore. The study examines the way that bilingual speakers strategically use code-switching to perform speech acts and to manage the conversational principles of the communication and thereby advances our understanding of language in use in a multilingual professional setting.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on two important theories in the field of pragmatics that are Speech Act Theory and Grice's Co-operative Principle. These are employed together to critically examine the role of Urdu-English code switching as a pragmatic resource in professional discourse. Theories presented in this study are not treated as abstract models but as models to examine

the construction, negotiation, and interpretation of meaning in context of bilingual interaction.

Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory was first outlined by Austin (1962) and later developed by Searle (1969) which takes the view that language is an action. Within this framework, each act of the speaker is related to three other acts: the locutionary act (what the speaker says); the illocutionary act (what the speaker means to do); and the perlocutionary act (what the speaker actually does). Of these, the illocutionary act is the one that plays a key role in this research because it demonstrates the intention of the speaker in communicating. The analytical basis of this research is taken from illocutionary acts classification of Searle. They are assertives (statements of fact or belief), directives (attempts to make the listener do something), commissives (commitments to future action), expressives (psychological states expressed) and declarations (utterances that change reality). In professional discourse, directives and commissives are significant, because in the business context there is much of instruction, asking, commissioning and negotiating. This study aims to highlight the way these speech acts are realised and modified in the presence of code switching in Urdu – English. It looks at the effect of language shifting on the level, tone and meaning of illocutionary force. For example, a statement made in English could be softened by being translated into Urdu and thus changing its pragmatic effect. This makes code switching an analysis of the functional rather than a structural phenomenon, influencing communicative intent.

Grice's Cooperative Principle

The analysis of the ways in which conversational meaning is handled by the speakers is also based on the principle of Cooperative Principle developed by Grice (1975), in addition to Speech Act Theory. Grice suggests that there are four maxims to effective communication: firstly, quantity, that is, providing the right amount of information; secondly, quality, that is, being truthful; and thirdly, relation, that is, being relevant; fourthly, manner, that is, being clear and orderly. The following maxims are not strict rules but suggest general guidelines for the speaker that may be obeyed, bent, even violated to impart implied meanings. In this study, the concept of implicature is especially significant because it helps to clarify how speakers imply information that lies outside the literal meaning of their speech. In bilingual texts, code switching can be used as a way to achieve such implicatures. For instance, using Urdu instead of English may provide indirectness and/or politeness or hesitation when talking, without explicitly communicating it. In this study, the code-switching relationship and interaction between Urdu and English languages and Gricean maxims in professional communication is explored. It considers the effects of alternation between languages in increasing clarity and precision (and, as per the maxims, support them) or the effects of alternation between languages obscuring, softening, implying meaning (and, as per the maxims, flouting them). This research accentuates the dynamic interaction between language choice and conversational principles in bilingual interaction.

Theoretical frameworks are integrated.

Speech Act Theory emphasises the functional aspect of utterances and the Grice model deals with the rules which guide conversational meaning, the model can be used in tandem to analyse bilingual language use more fully and completely. While the principles of Speech Act Theory enable us to use the theory to identify what speakers are doing with language, the principles of the Cooperative Principle provide us with a way to explain how speakers manage meaning within interaction. Combining these frameworks, the study can explore not only the nature of the speech acts enacted during the professional discourse but also how code-switching helps to collate and understand the speech acts enacted in the discourse. The integrated method gives a comprehensive picture of the communicative competence of bilingual individuals in their use of language in a work environment.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The design of the study is qualitative and the approach is discourse analysis. A qualitative approach is deemed appropriate for this research since an in-depth examination of naturally occurring language is required, focusing on context, meaning and interactional aspects. Discourse analysis is particularly appropriate as the examination is not concerned with quantifiable linguistic patterns rather than how speakers create meaning through language in real-life professional contexts.

Research Setting

This study involved data gathered from professional settings in Lahore such as corporate offices, private universities and degree colleges. The settings were chosen because they are places where Urdu–English bilingualism occurs and is important. These are often environments where people communicate differently across hierarchy levels and are thus important when studying speech acts, politeness tactics and pragmatic decisions.

Participants

A total of 14 bilingual professionals (both university faculty and administrative and corporate employees) participated in the study. Purposive sampling method was used to select the participants as they were involved in professional communication in both Urdu and English. Participants were chosen based on the criteria that they used both languages on a regular basis in the workplace and that the data they provided was relevant to the research.

Data Collection

The data comprise some eight hours of audio recorded naturally occurring workplace interaction, with a small amount of semi structured interview. The recordings contain meetings, informal conversations, and task-oriented conversations that give multiple examples of communicative contexts. To get a deeper understanding of participants' language choices and their perceptions of code switching in the world of work, semi-structured interviews were held.

Informed consent was obtained and the purpose of the study explained in all cases. Great efforts were made to avoid any significant alteration of the natural flow of interaction due to the presence of recording devices.

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis has been carried out in a systematic multi-step procedure:

All data have been transcribed with the use of a simplified system of transcription, and all cases of code switching have been retained. The transcripts were scanned for Urdu–English code switching and these code switching instances were extracted. The following instances were classified according to well-known typologies (Poplack, 1980) as inter-sentential switching or intra-sentential switching. Each verbatim was studied and classified with reference to Searle's classification of speech acts (1969). This data was then analyzed using the Cooperative Principle (CP) of Grice (1975) to determine whether the conversational maxims are followed, broken or manipulated. Finally, the pragmatic functions of code switching were explored in the light of the particular interactional context, such as attention to politeness, communicative intent and power relations. Analysis is interpretative, concerned with the construction and negotiation of meaning rather than on statistical generalization.

Ethical Considerations

Research was conducted in an ethical manner. All subjects gave written informed consent before participating in the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured and all identifying information was removed from the transcripts. Moreover, they could pull out of the study at any time without any consequences. The data collected was used only for educational purposes and securely stored.

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis shows that code switching in Urdu and English in Pakistani professional discourse is not a random or unconsciously used linguistic mechanism but is rather

systematic and purposeful communicative mechanism. The results indicate that bilinguals make use of code switching in order to influence the illocutionary force of their message, regulates interpersonal relations, and applies conversation principles as described by Grice's Cooperative Principle in a strategic manner.

This paper examines Code-Switching and the realization of speech acts.

One of the key conclusions in this research is that code switching is very important in changing the force and interpretation of speech acts especially directives. For example, directives can often be face threatening in professional settings because they are directives that involve tasks or expectations being placed on others. The data reveal that, speakers often start in English, to set the stage and provide institutional authority and then switch to Urdu to tone down the effect. In one occasion, for example, a senior employee told another employee, "Please fill in the paperwork by today... agar ho sake to thora jaldi kar dena." It is first stated in English, since this language is used for precision and formal authority. But the switch to Urdu brings in a mitigative tone, making the expression more polite and less imposing. This pattern is an indication that code switching is used as a pragmatic tool to fine-tune illocutionary force. This is consistent with the classification of directives found in Searle (1969) where the strength of an illocutionary act is not determined but can be adjusted by linguistic means. In this sense, Urdu is used to soften the impact of the command and thus lessen the threat to the face while still achieving the desired effect. The same is true for commissive speech acts (promises, commitments, etc.). Participants often used Urdu to express willingness or assurance, as it conveys sincerity and personal engagement. English, on the other hand, was more prevalent in situations where clear commitment and accountability were needed, including formal commitments.

Distributive language authority and assertives.

The analysis also shows that assertive speech acts is highly related to the functional distribution of languages. English is the language of institutional authority and precision of task and is used mostly for factual or technical statements and/or task-oriented statements. For instance, deadlines, procedures, and documentation were repeatedly expressed in English, even if the rest of the message was in Urdu. In contrast, Urdu is much more often used to elaborate, to clarify, or to give context to a sentence. This implies that English has informational authority whereas Urdu contributes to the interpersonal accessibility. The relationship between the two languages enables language users to achieve clarity and/or personal relationship, which make communication effective and socially appropriate.

Interpersonal Management and Politeness Strategies

The present study provides one of the most important results in the study of code switching in terms of politeness and interpersonal relationships. Solidarity and authority are important in hierarchical professional contexts. From the data, it is observed that Urdu is consistently employed as a device to ensure politeness, respect and social alignment. Urdu is also used by subordinates with their superior, in particular, when asking for something or agreeing. "Yes sir, main ye kaam kal tak complete kar doon ga" is an example of a response made by a participant to the supervisor. The insertion of Urdu here indicates respect and willingness and further strengthens the hierarchical norms. This is in line with politeness theory outlined by Brown & Levinson (1987) which highlights the need to minimise face threatening acts in communication. By using code switching, speakers can effectively deal with these social dynamics, using the linguistic forms that are expected at this time to display a respect and professionalism which is expected by the cultural norms. Meanwhile, senior professionals play smart games in English and Urdu, shifting from one to another to control their authority. English is used for formal teaching but there are some urduizations in the moments when empathy, encouragement or negotiation is needed. This shows that code switching is not just

a product of linguistic ability but also an intentional communication strategy to interpersonal management.

Code-Switching and Gricean Maxims

Another point of view on the pragmatic functions of bilingual discourse is offered by the joint action of code-switching with Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle. The data shows that both conversational maxims are followed and also manipulated by the speakers in such a way that language alternation can be used.

Maxim of Manner (Clarity and Precision)

The shift to English often comes with a level of clarity and precision, often in technical or administrative matters. The participants consistently used the English language without any ambiguity to follow the maxim of Manner. This is indicative of the institutional status of English as a language of specificity and formal communication.

Maxim of Quantity (Information Management)

In a few cases the speakers used Urdu to explain and elaborate the information which was already in English. This implies that code switching is a means for speakers to enrich the interaction with further contextual information, thus making it more informative.

The maxim of Relation (Relevance)

A second role of code switching is as a cue to the relevance of the discourse. Language alternation may be a signal for a change in mode (formality/ informality) in the communication, which aids the understanding of the focus of an utterance for the interlocutors.

Flouting Maxims and Generating Implicature

One of the most interesting discoveries is that Urdu is used to violate conversational maxims and create implicature. Often, indirect refusal and expressions of hesitation are expressed in Urdu, enabling them to avoid an outright rejection. For instance, when asked to respond, one person said "Dekhte hain, agar time mila to kar lenge," which means that he/she was uncertain/hesitant but did not outright refuse the task. These are examples of how code switching can be important in facilitating indirectness and nuanced meaning making. Language alternation is more than just lexical or syntactic cues; as a way of enriching the communicative process, it is used to imply meanings.

The code switching can be classified into two categories:

There are two types of code switching:

All the data showed code-switches both within sentences and between sentences, with the former being more common. A high level of bilingual competence with participants being able to easily combine elements of both languages in one speech. The intra-sentential switching is quite common in routine communication in the workplace, in which in which English words are interspersed into Urdu sentences. This implies that the English language has been well assimilated within the work context, and it can be used as a word resource for certain areas, e.g., administration and technology. Inter-sentential switching, on the other hand, is more related to changes in function of communication. The speaker will alternate languages from sentence to sentence to indicate changes in tone, intent and/or formality. This means that code switching is used in several different ways for various pragmatic functions in professional interaction.

Code-Switching as a Strategic Pragmatic Resource

In summary, the results indicate that Urdu–English code switching is a flexible pragmatic resource in the Pakistani professional discourse that is context-sensitive. Speakers do not change languages just for the fun of it but rather choose to change languages in a communicatively appropriate or strategic manner that is dependent on the communicative objectives, social context, and interactional dynamics.

The purpose of code switching is that the speakers can:

Increase or decrease the force and intonation of speech acts

Follow hierarchical relationships and rules of politeness

Use of clear and precise language. Improved clarity and precision in communication.
Create and convey connotation and implication.

The functions show the relevance of pragmatic competence in multilingual contexts. Polysensual shifts in language and between language and non-language forms the ability to strategically switch through languages, indicating an advanced communicative and social norm understanding.

Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring the pragmatic functions of Urdu–English code switching in Pakistani professional discourse in the light of pragmatic approaches of Speech Act Theory and Grice's Cooperative Principle. The results show that code switching is not a spontaneous or incidental process of bilingual communication but a systematic and strategic tool which speakers use in interaction to convey a specific communicative intent in the workplace. Results of the analysis indicate that code switching is an important aspect in the realization of speech acts especially directives and commissives. In turn, through the use of both English and Urdu, the speakers can adjust the strength and tone of their speech and thus control their authority–politeness balance. Urdu is mainly known for expressing interpersonal sensitivity and solidarity and cultural alignment, while English is mostly used for precision and clarity, and institutional authority. This functional distribution helps speakers manage complex work relationships effectively. In addition, the study has brought to light the dynamic relationship between code switching and Gricean maxims. Bilingual speakers are also expected to follow the rules of conversation, and they master them and manipulate them in the context of language alternation. Code switching is employed to clarify, add information and indicate relevance; code switching can also be used for the generation of implicature (indirectness) and mitigation. Thus, a bilingual text not only uses language to create meaning, but it also uses the language selection as a means to create meaning.

The findings also suggest that there is more intra-sentential (within a sentence) code switching than inter-sentential (between sentences) code switching as it was observed in the presence of a high level of bilingual competence among professionals in Lahore. This smooth use of linguistic resources is an indication that code switching is a natural and not an exceptional or marked way of communication in professional discourse. On a theoretical level, this study helps to expand classical pragmatic approaches to the multilingual context. It uses the Cooperative Principle and Speech Act Theory to show how relevant these theories are for the Urdu – English discourse in the context of bilingual settings, but they need to be sensitive to the context. From a practical perspective, the study can provide valuable insights into the communicative strategies that are used by professionals in multilingual settings, and the role of pragmatic competence in interaction in the workplace. The study still has some drawbacks, however. The data only represent a relatively small sample of Lahore and may not be representative of the diversity of professional communication in Pakistan. Future studies could build on this work using a larger data set, by using mixed methods or in other regional and institutional settings. To wrap up, Urdu-English code switching can be viewed as an advanced pragmatic tool which enables the code switchers to accomplish actions, maintain relationships and create meaning in subtle and context-specific manner. The study highlights the importance of seeing bilingualism as a resource rather than a hindrance for communicative effectiveness in professional discourse.

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