

## Code-Switching Practices Among Pakistani EFL Teachers: A Sociolinguistic Investigation

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**ABSTRACT:** Code-switching, the alternation between two or more languages within a single discourse, is a common phenomenon in multilingual classrooms. In Pakistan, where English functions as an official language alongside Urdu and numerous regional languages, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers frequently engage in code-switching practices. This study investigates the sociolinguistic functions, motivations, and pedagogical implications of code-switching among Pakistani EFL teachers. Employing a mixed-method research design, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires from 30 EFL teachers working in public and private institutions. The analysis draws upon John J. Gumperz's interactional sociolinguistics and Carol Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model to interpret switching patterns and their communicative significance. Findings reveal that teachers strategically use code-switching to clarify complex concepts, manage classroom discipline, build rapport,

explain grammar rules, and facilitate comprehension. While some participants perceive code-switching as a pedagogical necessity, others express concerns about overreliance potentially hindering students' target language proficiency. The study concludes that code-switching, when used judiciously, serves as an effective instructional resource rather than a deficiency. It reflects the dynamic linguistic ecology of Pakistani classrooms and aligns with sociocultural perspectives on language learning. The research recommends context-sensitive language policies and teacher training programs that acknowledge bilingual realities instead of enforcing rigid monolingual norms.

**Keywords:** *Code-switching, Sociolinguistics, EFL Teachers, Pakistani Classrooms, Bilingualism, Language Policy*

## 1. Introduction

Language classrooms situated within multilingual societies rarely operate according to strictly monolingual norms, despite official policies that may advocate such practices (Bonacina-Pugh and Bilingualism 2020). In contexts where multiple languages coexist and interact across social, political, and educational domains, teachers and learners inevitably draw upon their full linguistic repertoires to facilitate understanding, construct meaning, and negotiate identities. Pakistan represents a particularly rich example of such linguistic diversity. English, Urdu, and numerous regional languages including Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi—function simultaneously within different spheres of public and private life (Arshad). English holds the status of an official language and is widely associated with higher education, professional advancement, and global mobility. Urdu, as the national language, serves as a lingua franca connecting diverse ethnic and linguistic communities. Within this complex linguistic ecology, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms frequently become dynamic sites of language contact and alternation, commonly described as code-switching (Bhatti, Shamsudin et al. 2018). Code-switching refers to the systematic alternation between two or more languages or language varieties within a single interaction, sentence, or discourse event. Far from being a random or chaotic phenomenon, code-switching is now widely recognized in sociolinguistics as a rule-governed and socially meaningful practice.

Earlier pedagogical traditions, particularly those influenced by communicative language teaching and structuralist approaches, strongly discouraged the use of learners' first language (L1) in second or foreign language classrooms. The dominant assumption was that maximum exposure to the target language (L2) would naturally result in improved proficiency. Within this monolingual paradigm, the presence of L1 was often perceived as interference, a crutch, or even evidence of inadequate teaching competence (Fallas Escobar 2016).

However, contemporary scholarship in applied linguistics and sociocultural theory challenges this monolingual bias. Increasingly, researchers argue that bilingual practices including code-switching can serve as valuable cognitive and pedagogical resources (Ramaila 2025). From a sociocultural perspective, language learning is mediated through interaction, and the L1 can function as a scaffold that supports comprehension, critical thinking, and participation. Rather than obstructing acquisition, strategic L1 use may enhance conceptual understanding and reduce anxiety, particularly in contexts where learners' exposure to English outside the classroom is limited. Consequently, the debate has shifted from whether code-switching should occur to how and under what conditions it can be used effectively. In the Pakistani context, EFL teachers frequently alternate between English and Urdu during classroom instruction. This alternation is not arbitrary; instead, it is typically motivated by pedagogical, social, and contextual considerations. Teachers may switch to Urdu to clarify complex grammatical explanations, translate unfamiliar vocabulary, provide culturally relevant examples, manage classroom discipline, or foster rapport with students. Such shifts often reflect an intuitive understanding of students' linguistic needs and proficiency levels. At the same time, they may also signal broader sociolinguistic dynamics, including issues of authority, solidarity, and institutional expectations (Gal 2012).

These classroom practices raise significant theoretical and practical questions. Is code-switching merely a compensatory strategy reflecting gaps in learners' or teachers' English proficiency, or does it function as a deliberate communicative strategy embedded within bilingual competence? How do teachers themselves interpret and justify their language choices? Do institutional policies align with actual classroom practices, or is there a divergence between official discourse and

pedagogical reality? Furthermore, what sociocultural meanings are constructed and negotiated through these language choices in a postcolonial society where English carries symbolic capital and prestige. This study seeks to address these questions by examining the sociolinguistic functions, motivations, and pedagogical implications of code-switching among Pakistani EFL teachers. Drawing on theoretical insights from interactional sociolinguistics and the Markedness Model, the research conceptualizes code-switching as a socially situated practice that indexes relationships, identities, and power structures within the classroom (Woolard 2004). Interactional sociolinguistics emphasizes how speakers use linguistic choices as contextualization cues to signal shifts in footing, topic, or participant roles. Similarly, the Markedness Model interprets language choice as a negotiation of social norms, where speakers select either expected (unmarked) or unexpected (marked) codes to achieve specific communicative goals. Applying these frameworks enables a deeper understanding of how classroom language alternation reflects not only pedagogical concerns but also broader sociocultural realities (Johnson 2006).

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to ongoing debates surrounding bilingual pedagogy in multilingual and postcolonial contexts. In Pakistan, English proficiency is closely linked to academic achievement, socioeconomic mobility, and access to global opportunities. As a result, language policies in many institutions promote English-only instruction as a marker of quality and prestige. Nevertheless, the everyday realities of classroom interaction reveal a more nuanced picture, where teachers pragmatically adapt their linguistic choices to students' needs (Nikula and Education 2005). By systematically investigating these practices, the present study challenges simplistic binaries between monolingual purity and bilingual deficiency. Understanding teachers' code-switching practices has important implications for language policy development, curriculum design, and teacher education programs. Rather than enforcing rigid monolingual norms that may be disconnected from classroom realities, policymakers and educators might consider context-sensitive approaches that acknowledge bilingualism as an asset. Teacher training programs, in particular, can benefit from incorporating awareness of strategic code-switching, helping educators balance meaningful target-language exposure with cognitive and social support mechanisms (Lauta and Estremera 2025).

In sum, Pakistani EFL classrooms offer a compelling site for exploring the interplay between language, pedagogy, and society. By examining how teachers navigate linguistic choices within a multilingual environment, this study aims to reconceptualize code-switching not as a pedagogical weakness but as a dynamic, socially embedded, and potentially empowering instructional resource (Ramaila 2025).

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Code-Switching***

Code-switching has been widely explored across sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, and applied linguistics (Akhtar, Khan et al. 2016). Early research primarily adopted structural approaches, focusing on grammatical constraints that govern language alternation. Scholars examined syntactic boundaries and morpho-syntactic compatibility between languages, aiming to determine where switching could occur without violating linguistic rules. While such studies contributed significantly to understanding the structural patterns of bilingual speech, they often overlooked the social motivations and interactional meanings embedded in language alternation. Subsequent developments in sociolinguistic theory shifted attention from structural constraints to communicative functions (Guy 1990). Functional and interactional approaches argue that code-switching is not merely a mechanical alternation between linguistic systems but a socially meaningful practice shaped by context, identity, and power relations. Within this paradigm, bilingual speakers are viewed as competent language users who strategically select codes to achieve particular discourse goals. One of the most influential contributions in this regard is John J. Gumperz's interactional sociolinguistics framework. Gumperz conceptualizes code-switching as a contextualization cue—an interpretive signal that guides listeners in understanding how utterances should be framed within a given interaction. According to this perspective, switching languages may signal a shift in topic, participant alignment, speech activity, or social distance. In classroom discourse, such shifts are particularly salient. For example, a teacher may employ English during formal explanation but switch to Urdu when providing personal anecdotes, emphasizing important points, or disciplining students. The change in

code thus functions as a pragmatic marker that structures classroom interaction and indexes relational dynamics (Tao, Chen et al. 2023).

Another central theoretical model is Carol Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model, which explains language choice as a negotiation of social relationships (Scotton 1983). According to this theory, speakers choose between "unmarked" and "marked" codes depending on the social norms and expectations of a given setting. The unmarked code aligns with established conventions and role relationships, whereas the marked code signals a departure from those norms, often redefining social distance or authority. In Pakistani EFL classrooms, English frequently represents the unmarked choice for formal instruction due to its institutional prestige and curricular role (MuHAMMAD 2022). Conversely, switching to Urdu may function as a marked choice, signaling solidarity, empathy, urgency, or reinforcement of authority. Through such choices, teachers actively negotiate their professional identities and relationships with students. Together, interactional sociolinguistics and the Markedness Model provide complementary insights. While the former highlights discourse-level cues and interpretive processes, the latter emphasizes broader social norms and power structures shaping language selection. Integrating these perspectives allows for a nuanced understanding of code-switching as both an interactional and sociopolitical phenomenon (Ramaila 2025).

## ***2.2 Code-Switching in Educational Contexts***

In educational research, code-switching has been conceptualized both as a pedagogical strategy and as a reflection of sociocultural realities (Wang and Mansouri 2017). Historically, language teaching methodologies such as the Direct Method and Audio-Lingual Method promoted strict target-language use, discouraging learners' first language (L1) in the classroom. The rationale behind such approaches was rooted in immersion principles, which assumed that increased exposure to the target language would naturally facilitate acquisition. However, this monolingual orthodoxy has increasingly been challenged. Influenced by sociocultural theory and constructivist perspectives, contemporary scholars argue that learning is mediated through language and social interaction. From this viewpoint, the L1 can serve as a cognitive tool that enables learners to process

complex ideas, compare linguistic structures, and internalize new knowledge. Code-switching thus becomes a form of scaffolding that bridges the gap between prior knowledge and new linguistic input (Bao 2025).

Empirical studies conducted in multilingual contexts such as China, Malaysia, the Middle East, and various African nations consistently report that teachers use code-switching for multiple pedagogical functions (Susiawati, Azkiyah et al. 2025). These include explaining abstract grammatical concepts, translating unfamiliar vocabulary, clarifying task instructions, managing classroom behavior, and reducing learner anxiety. In many cases, students themselves express positive attitudes toward strategic L1 use, perceiving it as supportive rather than obstructive. Such findings suggest that code-switching can enhance comprehension and foster inclusive classroom environments, particularly where students have limited exposure to English outside school (Badari 2024). Nonetheless, the use of L1 in EFL classrooms remains a contested issue. Critics argue that excessive reliance on code-switching may reduce meaningful exposure to the target language, limit opportunities for communicative practice, and reinforce dependency on translation. From this perspective, teachers must strike a careful balance between facilitating understanding and maximizing English input. The central debate, therefore, revolves not around the existence of code-switching but around its frequency, functions, and pedagogical effectiveness (Üstünel and Seedhouse 2005).

### ***2.3 Code-Switching in the Pakistani Context***

Pakistan's linguistic landscape is shaped by its colonial history, postcolonial language planning, and sociopolitical hierarchies. English, introduced during British colonial rule, continues to occupy a prestigious position in governance, higher education, and elite institutions (Üstünel and Seedhouse 2005). It symbolizes modernity, global connectivity, and socioeconomic advancement. Urdu, while functioning as the national language and a symbol of unity, does not always carry the same institutional authority in academic settings. Additionally, numerous regional languages contribute to the country's multilingual mosaic, further complicating language dynamics in education (Sierens and Van Avermaet 2014).

Within this context, code-switching between English and Urdu is a common feature of classroom discourse. Studies conducted in Pakistani schools and universities indicate that teachers frequently alternate languages for pedagogical clarity and social alignment. Functional motivations include translating complex vocabulary, elaborating on abstract concepts, emphasizing key points, injecting humor, and maintaining classroom discipline (Kabooha 2023). Particularly in public-sector institutions, where students often come from diverse linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds, switching to Urdu can ensure inclusivity and comprehension. At the sociocultural level, language choice in Pakistani classrooms also reflects issues of power and identity. English-medium instruction is often associated with prestige and academic excellence, especially in elite private schools (Jahan and Hamid 2019). Consequently, some institutions enforce English-only policies to project quality and maintain competitive advantage. However, research suggests that even in such settings, teachers may discreetly switch to Urdu when necessary. This divergence between official policy and actual practice reveals a tension between ideological commitments to monolingualism and the practical realities of bilingual communication. Despite the growing body of scholarship on classroom code-switching in Pakistan, many studies remain descriptive and lack a strong theoretical foundation. There is a need for research that systematically applies sociolinguistic frameworks to interpret how language choices index relationships, authority, and identity in educational settings. By integrating interactional sociolinguistics and the Markedness Model with empirical data, the present study aims to fill this gap and provide a comprehensive sociolinguistic analysis of code-switching practices among Pakistani EFL teachers (Jahan and Hamid 2019).

### **3. Methodology**

#### ***3.1 Research Design***

This study adopts a mixed-method research design in order to provide a comprehensive and balanced understanding of code-switching practices among Pakistani EFL teachers. The rationale for selecting a mixed-method approach lies in the complex and multidimensional nature of classroom language use. Code-switching is not only a measurable behavioral phenomenon but also a socially and

pedagogically meaningful practice shaped by teachers' beliefs, institutional expectations, and student needs. Therefore, combining quantitative and qualitative data enables a deeper exploration of both the frequency and the underlying motivations of language alternation. The study integrates three primary data collection methods: classroom observations, structured questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. This triangulation strengthens the validity and reliability of findings by allowing cross-verification of results from multiple sources. Observational data provide insight into actual classroom practices, while questionnaires capture broader patterns and attitudes. Interviews, in turn, offer in-depth perspectives on teachers' motivations, beliefs, and reflections regarding their language choices. Together, these methods ensure a holistic sociolinguistic analysis of code-switching in authentic educational settings.

### ***3.2 Participants***

The study sample consisted of 30 Pakistani EFL teachers drawn from both public and private educational institutions. To ensure balanced representation, 15 participants were selected from public-sector schools and colleges, and 15 from private institutions. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who met specific criteria: (1) they were currently teaching English as a Foreign Language at the secondary or college level, and (2) they possessed bilingual competence in English and Urdu. Participants' teaching experience ranged from 2 to 15 years, allowing the study to capture perspectives from both relatively novice and experienced educators. All teachers reported regular use of both English and Urdu in their professional and personal communication. In addition, several participants indicated proficiency in regional languages such as Punjabi, Pashto, or Sindhi, reflecting the multilingual realities of Pakistani society. The diversity in institutional background and teaching experience enriched the dataset and enabled comparative insights into differences between public and private sector practice.

### **3.3 Data Collection Instruments**

#### ***1. Classroom Observations***

Ten classroom sessions were observed and audio-recorded to examine naturalistic instances of code-switching during instruction. Each observation lasted

approximately 40–50 minutes, corresponding to a regular class period. The observations focused on identifying when and why teachers switched from English to Urdu or vice versa. Field notes were taken to document contextual factors such as lesson type (grammar, literature, writing), student reactions, and interactional patterns.

Instances of code-switching were later transcribed and categorized according to functional domains, including explanation of complex concepts, vocabulary translation, classroom management, humor, emphasis, and rapport building. Observational data provided empirical evidence of actual linguistic behavior rather than relying solely on self-reported practices.

## ***2. Questionnaire***

A structured questionnaire was administered to all 30 participants. The instrument consisted of two sections. The first section included Likert-scale items designed to measure the frequency of code-switching and teachers' perceptions of its effectiveness. The second section included open-ended questions allowing participants to elaborate on their reasons for switching and their views regarding institutional policies.

The questionnaire aimed to quantify general patterns of code-switching and to identify attitudinal trends across the sample. The use of both closed and open-ended items ensured a combination of statistical measurability and qualitative richness.

## ***3. Semi-Structured Interviews***

To gain deeper insights into teachers' motivations and beliefs, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants (selected equally from public and private institutions). Each interview lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and was conducted in a flexible format, allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences.

Interview questions explored themes such as:

Situations in which teachers intentionally switch languages.

Perceived advantages and disadvantages of code-switching.

Institutional expectations regarding language use.

Personal beliefs about bilingual pedagogy.

These interviews provided nuanced explanations that could not be captured through observation or questionnaires alone.

### ***3.4 Theoretical Framework and Data Analysis***

Data analysis was guided by two complementary sociolinguistic frameworks. First, Gumperz's interactional sociolinguistics was used to interpret discourse-level functions of code-switching. Language alternation was examined as a contextualization cue signaling shifts in topic, authority, solidarity, or classroom activity. Second, Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model was applied to analyze how teachers' language choices reflected negotiations of social norms, institutional expectations, and relational dynamics.

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to identify common trends and patterns. Qualitative data from classroom observations and interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis. Recurring themes and categories were identified, coded, and interpreted in light of the theoretical framework.

### ***3.5 Ethical Considerations***

Ethical principles were strictly maintained throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided voluntary consent prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by assigning pseudonyms and removing identifying details from transcripts. Audio recordings and questionnaires were used solely for research purposes. By combining methodological rigor with theoretical grounding, this research design ensures a reliable and comprehensive investigation of code-switching practices among Pakistani EFL teachers.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Frequency and Context of Code-Switching

The findings of this study indicate that code-switching is a prevalent and normalized practice among Pakistani EFL teachers. Questionnaire results reveal that 90% of participants reported frequent use of code-switching during classroom instruction. Only a small minority claimed to limit switching to rare or exceptional circumstances. These self-reported patterns were corroborated by classroom observations, which demonstrated consistent alternation between English and Urdu across different lesson types. Observational data further revealed that switching most commonly occurred during grammar explanation, vocabulary clarification, and instruction-giving. Grammar lessons, in particular, generated a high frequency of code-switching, as teachers often shifted to Urdu to explain abstract rules such as tense usage, conditional structures, or complex sentence formation. Literary analysis classes also prompted language alternation when teachers elaborated on themes, figurative devices, or culturally nuanced expressions. In task-based activities, teachers switched to Urdu when clarifying assignment instructions to ensure that students fully understood procedural requirements.

A comparison between institutional types showed that public-sector teachers exhibited a slightly higher frequency of code-switching than their private-sector counterparts. This variation may be attributed to differences in students' English proficiency levels and socioeconomic backgrounds. Public institutions often serve students from diverse linguistic environments where exposure to English outside the classroom is limited. Consequently, teachers in these settings appear to rely more heavily on Urdu to facilitate comprehension. In contrast, teachers in elite private schools reported stronger institutional expectations for English-only instruction, which somewhat restricted overt code-switching practices, though it did not eliminate them entirely. These patterns suggest that code-switching is closely tied to contextual demands rather than being a random linguistic habit. The frequency and distribution of switching reflect pedagogical necessity, institutional culture, and perceived student needs.

## 4.2 Pedagogical Functions of Code-Switching

Analysis of observational and interview data identified five primary pedagogical functions of code-switching: clarification of complex concepts, vocabulary translation, classroom management, rapport building, and emphasis or humor.

**1. Clarification of Complex Concepts:** Teachers frequently switched to Urdu when explaining abstract grammatical rules or engaging in detailed literary analysis. Participants reported that certain linguistic concepts could be understood more efficiently when briefly explained in the students' shared language. For instance, tense distinctions or syntactic structures unfamiliar to learners were often clarified through comparison with Urdu equivalents. This function aligns with the notion of scaffolding, where L1 serves as a cognitive bridge to facilitate L2 understanding.

**2. Vocabulary Translation:** Lexical translation emerged as one of the most frequent triggers for switching. When encountering unfamiliar or technical vocabulary, teachers often provided immediate Urdu equivalents to prevent misunderstanding. While some educators attempted to define terms in English first, many resorted to translation when students displayed confusion. This strategy ensured clarity but also sparked debate among participants regarding the balance between comprehension and immersive exposure.

**3. Classroom Management:** Urdu was commonly used for disciplining students, regaining attention, or delivering urgent instructions. Teachers indicated that switching to Urdu conveyed seriousness and immediacy more effectively than English in certain situations. From a sociolinguistic perspective, such switching signals a shift in discourse role—from instructor to authority figure—and reinforces classroom control.

**4. Rapport Building:** Participants emphasized that occasional use of Urdu helped create a supportive and less intimidating classroom atmosphere. By incorporating culturally familiar expressions or informal remarks, teachers reduced social distance and fostered student participation. This relational dimension highlights the interpersonal function of code-switching beyond purely instructional purposes.

**5. *Emphasis and Humor:*** Switching to Urdu was also employed to emphasize key points or introduce humor. Teachers reported that culturally embedded jokes or idiomatic expressions were more impactful in Urdu, increasing student engagement and attentiveness. These shifts often marked transitions in tone, signaling lighter or more emphatic moments in classroom discourse. From Gumperz's interactional sociolinguistic perspective, these instances of switching function as contextualization cues that signal shifts in footing, discourse activity, and relational alignment. A change in code often marked a transition from formal explanation to informal commentary, from instruction to discipline, or from academic seriousness to humor. Similarly, Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model helps explain how switching to Urdu may operate as a marked choice that renegotiates authority or solidarity. While English may represent the unmarked code for academic instruction, Urdu becomes strategically marked when teachers seek to adjust social distance or emphasize power dynamics.

#### ***4.3 Teachers Perceptions of Code-Switching***

Teachers' attitudes toward code-switching were generally positive but nuanced. Approximately 75% of participants viewed code-switching as pedagogically beneficial when used judiciously. They argued that strategic L1 use enhances clarity, saves time, and prevents learner frustration. Many teachers described it as a practical necessity rather than a deliberate theoretical stance, emphasizing responsiveness to student comprehension. However, 25% of participants expressed concerns regarding potential overuse. These teachers feared that excessive reliance on Urdu might reduce English exposure and hinder fluency development. Some noted that students could become dependent on translation rather than developing inferencing skills in English. This tension reflects the broader debate within applied linguistics regarding optimal target-language input. Teachers working in elite private institutions reported institutional pressure to maintain English-only policies. English-medium branding was often associated with academic excellence and social prestige. Nevertheless, several participants acknowledged occasional switching for practical reasons, particularly when dealing with lower-level students or complex explanations. This

discrepancy between policy and practice underscores an ideological conflict between monolingual norms and bilingual classroom realities.

#### ***4.4 Sociolinguistic Implications***

The findings clearly demonstrate that code-switching in Pakistani EFL classrooms is neither random nor indicative of linguistic incompetence. Instead, it represents a strategic, socially meaningful, and pedagogically motivated choice shaped by contextual demands. Teachers employ bilingual resources to manage comprehension, negotiate authority, and foster interpersonal connection. Moreover, the classroom emerges as a microcosm of Pakistan's broader multilingual society. Language use within instructional settings reflects and reproduces social hierarchies, identity negotiations, and institutional ideologies. English symbolizes academic legitimacy and upward mobility, while Urdu functions as a vehicle of solidarity, accessibility, and shared cultural identity. Teachers' switching practices reveal how these symbolic meanings are dynamically negotiated in everyday interaction. Overall, the results suggest that code-switching should be understood as a functional and adaptive communicative strategy embedded within the sociolinguistic fabric of Pakistani education. Rather than enforcing rigid monolingual norms, educational stakeholders may benefit from recognizing bilingual competence as an instructional resource capable of enhancing both learning and social cohesion.

### **5. Conclusion**

This study examined code-switching practices among Pakistani EFL teachers from a sociolinguistic perspective, aiming to explore its functions, motivations, and pedagogical implications. The findings demonstrate that code-switching is a systematic and purposeful practice embedded within classroom interaction rather than a random or compensatory habit. Teachers strategically alternate between English and Urdu to clarify complex grammatical concepts, translate unfamiliar vocabulary, manage classroom discipline, build interpersonal rapport, and emphasize key ideas. These functions highlight the practical and interactional value of bilingual resources in facilitating effective teaching and learning. Importantly, the results suggest that judicious code-switching does not necessarily hinder English language

development. Instead, when used selectively and consciously, it enhances comprehension, reduces learner anxiety, and supports cognitive processing. The findings align with sociocultural theories of language learning, which emphasize mediation, scaffolding, and the constructive role of learners' prior linguistic knowledge. Code-switching, therefore, emerges as a pedagogically meaningful strategy that reflects teachers' responsiveness to students' needs and contextual realities. At a broader level, this research challenges rigid monolingual ideologies that dominate certain institutional policies. While English-only approaches may symbolize academic prestige, they often overlook the multilingual realities of Pakistani classrooms. The study advocates for context-sensitive language policies that acknowledge bilingual competence as an asset rather than a liability. Additionally, teacher education programs should incorporate critical awareness of strategic code-switching, equipping educators with the skills to balance meaningful English exposure with cognitive and social support mechanisms. In conclusion, code-switching in Pakistani EFL classrooms should not be perceived as a deficiency or weakness. Instead, it represents a dynamic instructional resource rooted in the country's rich linguistic landscape. Recognizing and harnessing this bilingual potential can contribute to more inclusive, effective, and contextually grounded language education practices.

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