

# Comparative Analysis Of The Use Of Code-Switching And Immersive Approaches For Esl Learners

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## Abstract

This research investigates a comparison between code-switching and immersive approaches in enhancing the spoken language skills of ESL undergraduate learners. The study focuses on undergraduate Business English courses. They employed a qualitative phenomenological research methodology. The study comprises 10 undergraduate students, chosen purposively to represent varying language backgrounds and proficiency levels. Data collection involved classroom observations and reflective diaries. The observations contrasted students' experiences in an immersive versus code-switching environment, evaluating aspects like fluency, syntax, vocabulary, confidence, and participation. Thematic analysis was carried out for the study. The results revealed that the immersive approach led to greater fluency, improved grammatical understanding, substantial vocabulary growth, and increased self-confidence among students. In contrast, code-switching exhibited limitations in inhibiting fluency and independent speaking abilities. It is recommended to limit code-switching, implement an immersive approach in promoting active participation, foster supportive conditions, and integrate technology for effective language education.

Keywords: ESL, Code-Switching, Immersive Approach, Fluency, Business English.

## Introduction

English has been used as a second language in Pakistan and has a dominant position in the state compared to the local native language. Rahman (2006) examined the significance of the English language within the realms of education, media, entertainment, and literature, aiming to demonstrate English's extensive and varied influence in these disciplines. English plays a significant position in the linguistic landscape of Pakistan and is frequently seen as a representation of social mobility, access to higher education, and involvement in international communication (Mahboob, 2002; Lashari, Umrani & Buriro, 2021). The proliferation of the English language in British India was primarily driven by the opportunities for economic and social advancement that it offered. Individuals acquire English proficiency through direct interpersonal interaction or structured educational institutions (Mahboob, 2013). Undoubtedly, the English language assumes a pivotal role in achieving academic excellence, encompassing both domestic and global contexts. Multiple justifications exist for recognizing English as a crucial factor in achieving academic excellence.

Proficiency in the English language is of utmost importance when engaging in academic writing. Students need to be able to compose essays, reports, research papers, and theses in English while adhering to the established conventions and standards of academia. Effective communication is crucial in academic environments, as it plays a vital role in facilitating class discussions, delivering presentations, and engaging in relationships with instructors and peers. High English proficiency significantly boosts an individual's capacity to articulate thoughts and actively participate in scholarly discussions effectively.

The effectiveness of language instruction in English classes at the undergraduate level is crucial for preparing students for effective communication in professional settings. However, there is a need to determine the most effective approach to enhance language proficiency. Currently, two prominent approaches, code-switching and immersive, are utilized in language education. However, there is limited research comparing the efficacy of these approaches, specifically in the context of undergraduate English classes. This research aims to address this gap by conducting a

phenomenological study comparing the efficacy of code-switching and the immersive approach in undergraduate business English classes. The findings of this research will contribute to the existing knowledge on practical instructional approaches in English education and provide insights to educators on selecting the most suitable approach for enhancing language skills at the undergraduate level.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do code-switching and immersive language learning impact learners' proficiency in spoken language?

### **Literature Review**

According to Article 251 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (1973), it is mandated that Urdu shall serve as the national language of Pakistan, but English shall retain its status as the official language for fifteen years until 1988 (Rahman, 2020). The British Empire established control over the Indian subcontinent during its colonial era when the English arrived in Pakistan. The introduction of English as the official language of government, education, and administration had a lasting effect on the area's linguistic landscape (Rehman, 1996). English has retained prominence in post-colonial Pakistan (Mahboob, 2009) because it is associated with elite education, esteemed institutions, and career prospects (Rahman, 2020). In order to provide teaching in English and support its growth as a language of upward mobility, English-medium schools and institutions were founded (Bokhari, 1999; Bukhari et al., 2023).

### **Language Policy in Pakistan**

Since the country's independence, English has come to be seen as the language of dominance and authority because it is connected to the elite urban class (Shamim, 2008; Lashari, Umrani & Buiro, 2021). The national language of Pakistan is Urdu, and English is used as the state's official language, while the regional languages have not been recognized. The administration adopted a bilingual policy, requiring English and Urdu in all official settings (Bukhari et al., 2023). Nevertheless, English continued to be widely used in law, research, and technology (Rahman, 2002; Fayaz et al., 2023).

The dominance of the English language in academia and organizational setup has led to English as the medium of instruction and assessment at all levels. One can not complete the degree if anyone is not good at English (Lashari et al., 2018; Lashari et al., 2023). According to Rahman (2004), Pakistan's ruling class supports the globalization movement by endorsing English through a rival system of exclusive education, endorsing the globalization movement's monopoly over English. This policy's main result is to make local languages less powerful and respected even in their nation. Placing the best-paying jobs in the hands of the international elite and the English-speaking elite of the periphery further erodes linguistic and cultural variety, weakens the "have-nots," and raises poverty.

After all, the world's most powerful nation speaks English. It became widely used as the language of the British colonies in Asia and Africa (Brutt-Griffler 2002). Then, due to American economic dominance, its hold on global media, and its involvement in international trade, English expanded after Britain left its former colonies. Phillipson (1992: 38–65) denounces this as linguistic imperialism, and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas refers to English as a "Killer language" (2000, p. 46). English proficiency has become a social status indicator, with English speakers frequently being seen as more educated and worldly. It has been used as a source of identity among undergraduate learners (Lashari, Umran & Buriro, 2021). The learners are more aware that knowing English helps advance their careers because of the demand for the English language in the job markets and academia (Rahman, 2010; Ahmed, Lashari & Golo, 2023). English is frequently viewed as an empowerment tool and a gateway to global opportunity (Ghouse, 2012; Madiha, Lashari & Ammara, 2023). However, this has also given rise to worries regarding applying language policies and equitably providing access to high-quality education (Malik, 2014; Amur, Bukhari & Lashari, 2023).

The historical colonial roots of English in Pakistan, its function as a language of education and social mobility, and its nuanced relationships with various regional languages all contribute to its rich history. English is crucial in many fields,

influencing people's educational and career paths while reflecting more significant linguistic and societal trends.

### **Speaking Skill**

To facilitate communication amongst individuals whose first language (L1s) is not English, English is employed as a global language and used widely as a bridge between connecting people (Haider & Fang, 2019). Due to historical, political, and economic factors, English has significantly influenced Asia and is currently regarded as an Asian language (Kachru, 1998; Mahboob, 2009), deeply ingrained in several facets of individuals' everyday existence. The global prevalence of English is experiencing a notable surge as a result of the phenomenon of globalization.

In academia, all four skills are essential in language education, while speaking and listening are taught and learned quickly for language competency development (Rao, 2012). Those fluent in English always remain successful in achieving their desired goals in life (Lashari, Umrani, Buriro, 2021). Teaching the English language requires the teacher to present the language item to the class, and the students situationalize it. Learners are more interested in using different approaches to be fluent in speaking skills in the target language, particularly the use of I.T. tools and cellphones (Lenneberg, 1967; Imran & Lashari, 2023; Madiha, Lashari & Ammara, 2023) because the significance of speaking skill of English language. Speaking skill is significant; without fluency in the target language, one cannot succeed academically (Amur, Bukhari & Lashari, 2023). As a result, language learners frequently assess their performance in learning a language and the success of their language course using how much they believe their spoken language skills have advanced (Richards, 2005). Additionally, it is believed that speaking should be developed because communication effectively enhances the performance of L2 students by helping them build self-confidence in the remaining linguistic abilities (Nasri & Biria, 2017; Namaziandost & Ahmadi, 2019; Ahmed, Lashari & Golo, 2023). Additionally, acquiring the target language's speaking abilities becomes apparent when.

### **Code-Switching**

The concept of codeswitching has attracted significant scholarly attention and has sparked substantial academic discussions. Scholars have actively debated and examined the merits and drawbacks associated with this phenomenon. The practice of codeswitching is commonly employed within educational environments that focus on instruction in English as a foreign language (EFL) (Temesgen & Hailu, 2022). Code-switching is the linguistic phenomenon when individuals alternate between two or more languages or language varieties during a singular interaction or discourse (García, 2009). The aforementioned linguistic phenomenon has garnered significant attention and has been extensively examined across multiple domains, including education, commerce, and interpersonal communication. In the context of graduate-level business courses, code-switching may manifest itself when students and instructors employ distinct languages or linguistic variations inside the educational setting. This literature review critically analyzes the extant scholarly research on code-switching in graduate-level business classes and explores its potential consequences for pedagogy and knowledge acquisition.

Similarly, an additional investigation by Lu (2018) delved into the utilization of code-switching within a postgraduate business course in the United States. The research revealed that code-switching was employed by both the educator and the learners as a means to enhance communication and elucidate intricate ideas. The research additionally revealed that code-switching was employed to foster a perception of inclusivity and promote cultural comprehension within the heterogeneous student body. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that not all research has yielded favourable outcomes regarding the efficacy of code-switching in educational settings. An investigation by Karamitroglou (2005) explored the utilization of code-switching within the context of an international business course in Greece. The research revealed that code-switching was predominantly employed by the instructor to compensate for deficiencies in their English language proficiency, adversely affecting the students' understanding of the subject matter.

### **Immersion Approach in ESL Context**

The pedagogical approach utilized in ESL (English as a Second Language) instruction is the immersion method, which emphasizes full and active participation in the target language, namely English. This particular approach is frequently denoted as the "total immersion" tactic. The pedagogical technique being discussed is based on the belief that immersion is the most efficient way to acquire language. This is similar to how young children acquire their first language by being constantly exposed to it in their environment (Lee & Chan, 2019).

The Immersion Approach to English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction entails immersing students in contexts where they are consistently and continuously exposed to the target language. There are various approaches to achieving this objective, such as engaging in immersion programs, participating in study abroad opportunities, or even simply residing in a region where English is predominantly spoken as the native language (Serafini, Rozell, & Winsler, 2022). Immersion programs utilize the target language, specifically English, as the primary means of educational delivery. Burkhauser et al. (2016) strongly advocate for the active participation of students in a wide range of English language communication activities, including but not limited to active listening, reading, and writing.

The principal aim of immersion classrooms is to cultivate an atmosphere that facilitates language acquisition by establishing an authentic and true-to-life context. This entails the utilization of the English language in practical contexts, encompassing talks, games, projects, and activities, as opposed to exclusively emphasizing formal exercises about Grammar and vocabulary (Ahmed, Lashari & Golo, 2023). The idea behind the immersion approach is that total immersion in a language is the most effective way to learn it. Students are compelled to communicate in the target language when it is all around them. Learning a language more quickly and naturally may result from this.

Baker (2006) advocates that teaching ESL through immersion is worthwhile. He claims that "the most effective way to learn a second language" is through immersion. The adoption of the immersion method is also encouraged by

the teachers. Cummins (2000) expressed that it "can lead to high levels of proficiency in the second language" (p.203).

### **Research Method**

The study implies the qualitative research method and phenomenological research design for the results. The sample size is N=10 students from different language backgrounds and proficiency levels. A purposive sampling technique is used.

Following the purposive and convenience sample technique, the participants for the current study were chosen. Purposeful sampling is one of the most effective tools for gathering specific, information-rich examples for in-depth analysis (Patton, 1990). Forty-five pupils comprised the study's population; 15 were girls, and 30 were boys. Ten graduate students in the second year of computer science who regularly attended ESL (L2) sessions at the Government University of Karachi participated in the current study. Purely purposive and conveyance sampling were used to choose the samples.

### **Data Collection**

Due to the intricate and diverse nature of the current study, the study employed classroom observations and reflective diary tools for data collection. The study's focus on a logical alignment between the research questions and the chosen research method was imperative, establishing a coherent connection between them. Secondly, an emphasis was placed on ensuring high research reliability and credibility in the selected approach (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, 2012).

Relying solely on observations proved insufficient in understanding the participants' psychological aspects within the classroom setting. To enrich the observations, reflective notes were taken from the students. These complementary techniques were strategically employed to streamline and enhance the research process.

### **Observations**

In applied linguistics, observation entails carefully checking participants' use of language in a classroom or other naturalistic environment to ascertain how language works (Cowie, N. 2009). With the teacher's permission, the researcher observed classroom lessons to gauge student engagement and assess their language proficiency and lecture understanding. Written notes were taken to preserve the record. For observation, one must know the scope and method of saving the data for reference (Simpson, M., & Tuson, 2003).

Two groups of students were observed; one taught using the immersion method, and the other taught using the code-switching method. The observation period they were extended over four days for each group. On the first day, the teacher introduced the basic grammar rules of speaking skills in English. The students were encouraged to ask questions and participate in the discussion.

On the second day, the teacher continued to teach the grammar rules, but she also introduced some new vocabulary. The students could still follow the lesson and participate in the discussion. On the third day, both groups of students engaged in impromptu speaking sessions.

Two groups of students were observed: one group was taught using the immersion teaching method, while the other was taught using the code-switching method. The observation period extended over four days for each group, and both groups underwent similar instruction and application phases as outlined below.

#### **Instruction Phase (Days 1-2)**

In the immersion group, the teacher exclusively used English to convey grammar rules, language concepts, and instructions. In the code-switching group, the teacher employed a combination of the target and local languages to explain the same content. The content explained was standard rules of speaking skills.

#### **Application Phase - Speaking (Day 3)**

Both groups engaged in impromptu speaking sessions, where they were encouraged to use English to express

themselves. The objective was to assess their fluency, vocabulary, syntax usage, and speaking skills.

**Reflective Diaries:** The students were asked to write reflective notes at the end of the intervention to gather participants' perceptions, attitudes, and feedback regarding the interventions. The researcher also maintained a reflective diary.

Keeping self-reflective diaries throughout the analytic process, according to Russell and Kelly (2002), is an approach that promotes reflexivity by using the researchers' journals to analyze "personal assumptions and goals" and to clarify "individual belief systems and subjectivities" (p. 2). By doing so, keeping reflective journals allows researchers to deliberately recognize their own experiences and values rather than trying to manipulate those values through methodology. In other words, reflective practice promotes discussion among researchers regarding their assumptions, experiences, behaviours, and justifications throughout the study process. In this sense, qualitative research is increasingly noticing reflective journals.

### **Data Analysis**

Through an iterative process of organizing codes into themes and categories, researchers develop a coherent and comprehensive. According to Jack Caulfield (2022), theme analysis is a method of assessing qualitative data. It is typically applied to a collection of texts, such as interviews, transcripts, etc. The researcher thoroughly examines the data to identify general or shared themes, topics, concepts, and recurring meaning patterns. There are various ways to do thematic analysis, such as coding, generating themes, defining themes, and so on.

Based on the data analysis, conclusions were drawn, and the findings were organized into distinct themes derived from the participants' responses. These themes were subsequently categorized into one primary group: speaking proficiency.

### **Results**

### **a. Speaking Fluency**

During the code-switching class observations, one participant's speaking fluency patterns were characterized by pauses and interruptions. For instance,

I [pause] am [pause and glanced around with a smile] not know English .....[long pause as if trying to think ].

Another participant was observed using filler words in his speech; he said

I attended school so that I can [ pause] you know ([pause ] learn, so that I can, you know, make a career, and so that I can, you know, develop. This journey is steps, I[ pause ], you know, acquire information and abilities that, like, build my future. Degrees are getting me a career. Therefore, sitting in the class today, I am studying. I go to school to learn and get an excellent job to improve.

The excerpt of the reflective diary of an immersive class is under

In the beginning, my English fluency and communication were quite limited. However, these classes pushed us to engage only in English conversations, prompting me to elevate my skills and confidently convey my thoughts in the target language. (P7)

### **b. Grammar**

In order to measure students' fluency, one of the participants from the code-switching class expressed

I am like food. I was going to a new restaurant. I am eating chowmein. I was like, taste.....

The investigation uncovered instances of first language interference and inappropriate use of present and past tenses. These mistakes revealed a lack of grasp of tense selection and sentence construction. One of the students from the immersive class wrote in his reflective diary.

English classes have genuinely made a positive impact on how I speak and use Grammar. Before, I used to struggle with putting my thoughts into words, and my sentences often felt jumbled. However, through these classes, I have

gained a better understanding of sentence structure and grammar rules.

I love the part where the teacher puts students in English speaking practice and gives them more opportunities to practice English, which helps improve their English.

The analysis revealed significant differences in language proficiency in code-switching and immersive classes. There were instances of first language interference and errors linked to present and past tenses in the code-switching environment, revealing light on participants' challenges with tense selection and sentence construction. "I am like food," Participant 3 said graphically, highlighting these linguistic issues.

Furthermore, the participant's concern in the code-switching class revealed a lack of sentence structure, grammar comprehension, and passion for the English sessions.

These findings highlight the advantages of an immersive language learning technique over code-switching. The immersive sessions promoted a better comprehension and application of grammatical rules, which resulted in improved sentence construction, more accurate tense usage, and a firmer general grasp of the English language. This shows that active participation in an English-speaking context benefits language proficiency, outweighing the difficulties associated with code-switching and providing a more effective channel for language skill development.

### **c. Vocabulary**

It includes a diverse vocabulary, ranging from everyday words to more specialized or technical phrases. Understanding how words are used, picked up, and structured within a linguistic system is fundamental to studying language.

In the observation of code-switching classes, one of the spoke in his speaking activity

I was absorbed in that new movie that came out last week. My friends told me it was so exciting and exciting; I said I would see that.....

The immersion class following observations were made

The observations from the code-switching and immersion classes provided insight into how various teaching approaches affect vocabulary development.

### **Discussion**

The study's findings underscore the benefits associated with employing an immersive language learning approach instead of utilizing code-switching. During the immersive sessions, there was observable evidence of enhanced grammatical proficiency, expanded vocabulary, and increased fluency in oral communication. The observed enhancements in linguistic competence indicate that engaging actively in an English-speaking environment yields more significant advantages for learners than code-switching.

It is essential to acknowledge that code-switching can yield certain advantages, such as facilitating learners' comprehension of instructions or concepts. Nevertheless, the study posits that the disadvantages associated with code-switching, such as achieving fluency, committing grammatical errors, and experiencing restricted vocabulary growth, surpass the advantages. The study underscores the significance of establishing immersive language learning settings to augment language proficiency. The utilization of immersion techniques seems to facilitate enhanced comprehension and application of grammatical principles, heightened proficiency in constructing sentences, more accuracy in using tenses, and a more comprehensive range of vocabulary, ultimately resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of the English language.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study's findings highlight the significant advantages of immersive language learning over code-switching in some areas related to spoken English ability. The findings show that although students in immersive

environments spoke more fluently and freely, those in code-switching classrooms often displayed constrained speech characterized by pauses and the overuse of filler words. Additionally, the immersive method shows more significant advantages in improving grammatical comprehension, syntactic application, and total language command, demonstrating its effectiveness in encouraging holistic language skill development. In contrast to the limits of code-switching, the immersion technique facilitates significant vocabulary increase, made possible by meaningful linguistic exchanges that naturally result in comprehensive and precise vocabulary use. Based on the study's results, it is recommended that Immerse students in the target language as much as possible. This will help them to improve their vocabulary, fluency, and understanding of syntax. Encourage students to use the target language as much as possible. Code-switching can hinder their ability to develop fluency in the target language. Students should be given opportunities to practice speaking the target language by participating in discussions, role-playing, and presentations. This will help them to build confidence and fluency. These recommendations can be used by educators, curriculum designers, and language practitioners to improve spoken language skills in language education programs. By following these recommendations, stakeholders can contribute to successful language education programs and better equip students for success in contemporary professional settings.

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