

Reasons and Contexts to Switch and Mix English Code by Pakistani Young Learners in their Native Speech: A Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract

This study aims to find out reasons and contexts to switch and mix English code in the speech by Pakistani young learners in Bahawalpur City Punjab, Pakistan. The sample of 53 young learners (both male and female) of BA (Hons.) 8th semester are taken from the two different disciplines i.e. the department of Biochemistry and Biotechnology and the department of English, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. The study is conducted with the help of closed-ended questionnaire consisting of two sections i.e. reasons and contexts to switch and mix English code with items following Likert Scale. The analysis shows that in almost all contexts, English code is switched and mixed in their speech by Pakistani young learners. They mostly do so for instrumental a purpose that does not make their own tongue to be inferior. It is only because English language has multidimensional usage and functions to perform which make it a hot cake nowadays.

Key Words: Code mixing, code switching, reasons, contexts.

1. Introduction

With advancements in trade and worldwide communication, bilingualism and multilingualism have become most common sociolinguistic phenomenon which includes switching and mixing of codes of different languages into one another to interact and get the message across successfully. With increased penetration of English Language into the lives of people, its usage in both formal and informal contexts is also rising day-by-day. People have started using English Code (either British or American) in their speech unconsciously which suggests its multi-purpose-ness and dynamic role.

Code-switching and code-mixing are the sociolinguistic phenomenon which are frequent among bilingual or multilingual communities. Pakistan is one among such countries where majority of people are either bilingual or multilingual. Being a second language in Pakistan, English language is learnt formally and practiced informally. Though informal contexts to practice it are not so much but people are aware of its importance to great extent. That is why, they usually mix and switch to English Code in their native language.

1.1. Question Formulation

There are variety of reasons and contexts due to which Pakistani people are compelled to mix and switch various language codes within their circles. But these reasons and contexts vary from each individual speaker to another.

This research focuses on answering various questions as to why do the young Pakistani learners mostly mix and switch English Code in their speech; what are the reasons and contexts due to which the learners are forced to mix and switch the English Code; why is it important to mix and switch English Code; and is there any difference in the type of reasons and contexts being shown by youngsters belonging to different interests.

Thus, the present study aims at knowing firstly the practicality of mixing and switching English Code; secondly the needs of today's world to mix and switch English Code; and finally the reasons and contexts which lead the young Pakistani learners mix and switch the English Code in their speech.

2. Literature Review

This part of the study deals with the review of the sociolinguistic studies conducted in Pakistani context. Anwar (2007) has carried out his research in the same realm but with the variation of using Urdu phrases and clauses in Pakistani English as a non-native variety. For the said purpose, he worked on empirical data taken from Pakistani English Newspapers and magazines. He has found that the use of Urdu phrases and clauses in Pakistani English 'is not a grammarless phenomenon' rather it is 'ruled governed activity'. Thus the 'occurrences of various Urdu phrases and clauses impose no ungrammatical effect on the construction of English Syntax'.

Ahmed et al. (2015) attempted to highlight the trends and functions of code-switching and code-mixing among Urdu EFL college students in Districts Okara and Chishtian, Punjab, Pakistan. The study has shown positive attitude of students towards code-switching and code-mixing in Urdu EFL class. Gulzar (2009) in Ph. D dissertation has attempted to explore functions of code-switching in the bilingual classroom discourse with special reference to the Diploma in TEFL at AIOU. His research has resulted in the conclusion that the qualitative and quantitative changes cannot be incorporated in the educational system of Pakistan unless the percentage of the use of code-switching and L1 in the classroom is determined. It also depends upon the clear cut policy on the medium of instruction according to the need of the bilingual society.

All the above mentioned researches are though conducted in the Pakistani context but the nature of the present study still differs in terms of its emphasis to explore the reasons and contexts to switch and mix English code by Pakistani young learners in their native tongue which is not being done by any of the above mentioned researchers. Similar kind of research to find the reasons to switch English code is done in the Malaysian context conducted by Muthusamy (...). In his study, he has tried to see the interaction in different identified domains involving three languages – Tamil, Malay and English. By doing so, he has identified several reasons for code-switching in various situations. In order to carry out his research, he has used Gumperz' (1982) 'communicative function of code switching' as a basis.

Furthermore, various studies conducted in several other contexts are presented as under:

Borbely (2000) studied the process of language shift and maintenance in the bilingual community of Romanian living in Hungary. Interviews were administered to collect data from 40 respondents. The collected corpus was used to study minority language in use and transcription of Romanian minority speech. The analysed data showed that the choice of Romanian and Hungarian in the community interactions and the factors involving in such choice code-switching both intra-language and inter-language, reasons for such switches and the relationship between age and frequency of code-switching in the interview situation the unequal competition of minority language and majority language at school.

Kuncha and Bathula (2004) studied the role of attitudes in language shift and language maintenance of Telugu immigrants living in New Zealand. Attitudes, of both Telugu speaking mothers of school-going children and the school-going children of 11 years and above, were examined. For that purpose, 14 mothers and 20 children were selected as sample of the study. Self-reporting questionnaires and structured interviews were administered to collect data. The questionnaire covered five major areas i.e. language proficiency, attitude towards English, attitude towards Telugu, attitude towards bilingualism and language maintenance. The analysis of the data showed that there was significant decrease in L1 (Telugu) use by Telugu families after their immigration to New Zealand. Mostly, English language was used by them in both formal and informal settings with their children. Consequently, Telugu community in New Zealand were facing dilemma of either preserving its mother tongue or let the children shift to English Language for educational attainment in schools. Redouane (2005) examined the effect of three linguistic constraints on code-switching and code-mixing of bilingual Moroccans who spoke both Arabic and French equally well while residing in Canada. Those three constraints according to Poplack (1980: 586) are equivalence of structure constraint, the free morpheme constraint, the size of the constituents constraint.

The aim of this paper was to investigate the validity of these constraints. For the purpose, the syntax of the intrasentential code-switching was examined between two typologically different languages i.e. Arabic and French. Four respondents were selected as the sample of the study. The questionnaires were administered for data collection. The speech of Moroccan immigrants was also tape-recorded in both formal and informal situations to identify different patterns of switches and to observe their attitudes towards maintaining Arabic over the years. The findings revealed that the speech of those Arabic-French bilingual Moroccans contained different types of switches regardless of any of the above mentioned constraints. Thus the study refuted the claim of Pop lack (1980).

Ayeomoni (2006) studied the style of language use in childhood in Yoruba speech community. The particular speech community i.e. the Ikale in Irele and Okitipupa Local Government Areas of Ondo State was selected. Chosen sample consisted of 30 male and 20 female Yoruba-English bilingual respondents falling within the age brackets of 25 to 40 years. As a tool of data collection, the questionnaire was designed. The analysed data illustrated that before entering school Yoruba was the only language of communication of almost 90% children. Later, even at primary school age, English started playing an important role as a language of educational institutions in children's lives. Hence, their mother tongue faced danger of loss as their home language as well as the outside one.

Dyers (2008) tried to investigate the use of L1 i.e. Afrikaans by high school learners in a township school in South Africa. He also examined their attitudes towards L1 to show how it continued to be strongly maintained in that community. The sample was taken from grades 8th, 9th and 10th. Responses were collected through both questionnaires and individual interviews. Data consisted of classroom responses of Afrikaans L1 learners on their use of L1 in different domains. The learners were also observed in informal playground situation. The analysis of the responses demonstrated that a number of factors were supporting the maintenance of Afrikaans in Wes bank. Those factors are the dominant role of Afrikaans as L1 of majority, a powerful sentimental attachment to the language as a mark of both individual and group identity, and the socio-spatial marginalization of the community.

2.1. Significance of the Study

This research study is significant and unique as such study is not done yet by any other researcher in Pakistani context. This study focuses on the reasons and contexts for which Pakistani young learners mix and switch English Code in their speech. It will also be helpful for the upcoming researchers to get into new directions for their own research studies being conducted with sociolinguistic interest.

The study is also significant as it discloses the current state of switching and mixing English Code in the native language by young Pakistani learners. Many researches up to the present time have been conducted by various sociolinguists with somehow same research interest but in different contexts. The research also gains significance by bringing both the reasons and contexts to switch and mix English Code in the native language by the young learners in Bahawalpur City into consideration. On a wider level, the research is significant in the sense that in the light of the obtained results, it will give way to certain necessary concluding points related to the importance and significance of switching and mixing English Code by Pakistani young learners.

3. Research Methodology

This part is a plan to conduct the present study. The sample of the present study consisted of 138 participants (both male and female) randomly selected from BA (Hons) 6th Semester session (2012-16) & 8th Semester session (2011-15) Semester, the Department of English and BS (Hons.) 6th Semester session (2012-16) & 8th Semester session (2011-15) (2011-15), the Department of Biochemistry and Biotechnology, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan. The reason to select the sample from two different disciplines belonging to the arts group and the science group was to conduct the comparative study and to show the differences in their reasons and contexts to switch and mix English Code in their speech.

As this study was about to know how many reasons and contexts are frequent among Pakistani Young learners, thus the focus was on the selection of that population that habitually and normally switches and mixes English Code in the speech. In order to maintain the same criteria to select the sample, population was taken only from those two disciplines where the rate of switching and mixing English Code in their speech was felt to be greater than the rest.

3.1. Data Collection Tool

As a data collection tool, a closed-ended questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire consisted of two separate sections i.e. Section A: Reasons of Switching and Mixing English Code; and Section B: Contexts for Switching and Mixing English Code. Thus the nature of this research study was quantitative. The closed-ended questions were analysed statistically.

3.2. Procedure

The questionnaire was administered under the researcher's supervision from the participants selected from the two separate disciplines i.e. the department of Bio-chemistry and Bio-technology and the department of English. The necessary instructions were given to the participants by the researcher to fill the questionnaire. The confidentiality related to the personal information of the participants was assured by the researcher.

4. Analysis and Findings

The data collected through the questionnaire was analysed statistically and presented in the form of graphs. The graphs show the percentile with which the young Pakistani learners either switch or mix English code for variety of below mentioned reasons and contexts.

4.1. Reasons: I switch and mix English Code [Following is the list of reasons mostly found for which young Pakistanis mix and switch English code in their speech.]

- i. to convey my message effectively
- ii. to influence the listener
- iii. to pose better social status
- iv. to exclude third person
- v. while forgetting any term in my own language
- vi. while quoting someone's exact words
- vii. while some alternate term is not present in my own language
- viii. while getting emotional
- ix. while showing my extreme annoyance with someone
- x. because I like this language
- xi. because this language is better than my own language
- xii. because I am motivated to do so as I find majority of people around me doing so
- xiii. because it is a global language and has variety of functions to perform in all contexts
- xiv. because it is the need of the hour
- xv. because I am forced to do so by my elders

The figures 4.1. and 4.2. show that the most common reasons among participants selected from the department of Bio-chemistry & Bio-technology and the department of English to switch and mix English Code in their native language are i, ii, iii, v, vi, vii, xiii, and xiv. On the other hand, the less common reasons are iv, viii, ix, x, and xii. The least common reasons to switch and mix the English code among all the participants selected for the present study are xi and xv.

4.2. Contexts: I mix and switch English Code [Following is the list of contexts mostly found for which young Pakistanis mix and switch English code in their speech.]

- i. during classroom/ lab activities
- ii. when I am with my friends at canteen
- iii. when I converse with my teachers
- iv. when I talk to opposite sex
- v. when I am at home
- vi. when I am at market place
- vii. when I am on phone call
- viii. when I am in library with my friends
- ix. when I am discussing some subject-related topic with my friends
- x. when I am talking to a stranger in a bus
- xi. when I am discussing something personal
- xii. when there is a foreigner at my department

- xiii. when I am chatting on skype, facebook, twitter etc.
- xiv. when I am smsing
- xv. when I am participating in a national/ international workshop/ seminar
- xvi. when I am out for dinners, shopping, tours, meetings, clinical examination etc.
- xvii. when I am surfing on internet
- xviii. when I am writing personal diary, reminders, notes, informal mails etc.

The figures 4.3. and 4.4. show that the most frequent contexts among participants selected from the department of Bio-chemistry & Bio-technology and the department of English to switch and mix English Code in their native language are i, iii, vii, viii, ix, xii, xiii, xiv, xv, xvi, xvii, and xviii. On the other hand, there are less frequent contexts as iv, v, vi, x, and xi in case of the participants belonging to the department of Bio-chemistry & Bio-technology than the participants selected from the department of English.

5. Findings

The analysis of the responses collected from the participants belonging to different areas of interest i.e. the department of Bio-chemistry and Bio-technology and the department of English show that participants belonging to both areas of interest switch and mix English Code in their native language in order to be effective in communicating their messages. It is important for all of them to influence the listeners so that they may respond properly.

They also switch and mix English Code in their native language mostly for they know the importance of English as a global language. They believe that it is the need of the hour to switch and mix English Code in their native language. All participants from both areas of interest switch and mix English Code in their native language when they forget any term in their own language and they take support of English Code to convey their complete message. They also do so when they quote exact words of a person in English. It is not so frequent among all participants to switch and mix English Code in their native language when they get emotional.

They all switch and mix English Code in their native language to pose better social position and exclude the third person. Moreover, they all do so when they want to show extreme annoyance with someone. Most infrequent reasons for all of them are to switch and mix English Code in their native language because this language is better than their own language and because they are forced to do so by their elders.

The reasons which are found more frequent among the participants belonging to the department of English are that they switch and mix English Code in their native language when they do not find alternate terms in their own language. Another common reason among these participants is to do so as they find majority of people doing so around them. Moreover, they switch and mix English Code in their native language because they like this language.

6. Discussion

The points are discussed as under in keeping the view the sequence of the questions raised.

6.1. Reasons for Switching and Mixing English Code

Most of the participants switch and mix English Code to convey their message effectively. They also believe that it is the need of the hour to switch and mix the English Code. For them it is important because English Language is a global language and has variety of functions to perform in almost all contexts. They do so while some alternate term is not present in their own language. However, almost half of the participants switch and mix English Code while forgetting any term in their own language, getting emotional and directly quoting someone's exact words. But there are only few who switch and mix English Code to not only influence the listener but also to pose their better social status, exclude third person and show extreme annoyance with someone. Moreover, they like English Language. All participants, however, do not consider that they switch or mix English Code because they think it to be better than their own language and their elders force them to do so.

6.2. Contexts for Switching and Mixing English Code

Majority of the participants switch and mix the English Code during their classroom activities, with their friends at canteen and in library, during conversation with their teachers, any stranger in a bus and opposite sex. Furthermore, they also do so while discussing some subject-related topic with their friends.

Mostly the participants are found in contexts like attending a national/ international seminar or workshop; going out for dinners, outings, tours, meetings, shopping, clinical examination etc.; writing diary, informal letters/mails, notes, and reminders; operating certain devices like ATM, mobile phone, laptops and computers. However, more than half of the participants switch and mix English Code at their home, while attending a phone call and with a foreigner at their department. But few of them do so when they discuss some personal issue. They also do so when they go for shopping at market place.

Importance of Switching and Mixing English Code

All the responses collected and analysed show the importance of switching and mixing English Code in the native language by young learners in Pakistan. The status of English as a global language and its multi-purpose uses and wide penetration in our lives put compulsion on students to switch and mix English Code in their native language. Mostly switching and mixing English Code is done for instrumental purposes. But still there are few instances related to the participants who have shown their deeper interest that is enough to switch and mix English Code for integrated purposes too. Participants believe that they can impart maximum of the information and messages with the help of switching and mixing English Code. It lessens their anxiety to express themselves effectively in any context with any reason.

6.3. Comparison of the Responses given by Participants Belonging to Different Interests

This part of the discussion focuses on the comparison of contexts for which Pakistani young learners with different disciplines switch and mix English Code in their speech. The analysis of the responses collected from the participants belonging to different areas of interest i.e. the department of Bio-chemistry and Bio-technology and the department of English show the clear cut comparison between the two different interest groups. In terms of above mentioned set of reasons, the majority of the participants belonging to the department of English are compelled to switch and mix English code in their speech as compared to the participants selected from the other discipline i.e. the department of Bio-chemistry and Bio-technology. This very difference also provides an insight that the preferences and provision of certain atmosphere to practice English language vary from discipline to discipline.

Furthermore, in terms of the proposed set of contexts, the same participants are found to be more frequent to meet variety of contexts as compared to the other group of participants. Thus it shows that the participants from the department of English are better aware of the importance of using English code. They know how to communicate well both literally and pragmatically as compared to the other group. It is also the matter of habit formation and development of one's need in such a way that communication without being a bilingual or the switching and mixing of the available codes seem impossible. Same is the case with the participants from the department of English.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, English Code is mostly switched and mixed in the speech by Pakistani young learners for instrumental purposes. As this language has fulfilled variety of purposes and functions of everyday life of today's world, thus it has become need of the hour for people. Even besides having instrumental purpose to switch and mix English Code in their native language, they show their personal interest to learn it for integrated purposes. It is because they like this language as well. Whatever the reason or context is, it demands one to either switch or mix English Code in his/her conversation. The message is not fully encoded or decoded until and unless Pakistani young learners switch and mix English Code in their native language. It has become part and parcel of one's communication.

Switching and mixing English Code in the speech by Pakistani young learners do not mean that their own language is less important and inferior or English language is much better than their own language, rather the diverse functions it can perform in all contexts makes it a hot cake now-a-days. It is this universality of the English language that it is penetrating deeper in their lives. It has increased functional value that compels people to switch and mix English Code in their native language. Previously, people switched and mixed English Code as either mark of better social identity or to impress and convince their listeners only. However, in today's world it has become need of the hour to achieve some better and prestigious place in society. It is the demand to switch and mix English Code in their native language as it is the only language with which all advanced technologies and devices are programmed and operated. Every advancement in science and technology enhances the importance and value of switching and mixing English Code by people of any community from any region in the world.

Learning English language has become very important for every young Pakistani so that to excel in their respective fields of interest do research and get their abilities exposed and acknowledged internationally. For the said purpose, there is the dire need to improve English language teaching scenario overall.

Moreover, switching and mixing English Code is also the result of awareness people have gained in the course of time. They know that it is because of their proficiency in English language that they can achieve some respectable and prestigious job. As it is used as a second language in Pakistan, thus, youngsters need to be good at using English Code. It is the source to excel for Pakistani youngsters in their respective fields. Pakistani young learners switch and mix English Code unconsciously as it has become their habit to do so. They do so voluntarily. Nobody forces them to switch and mix English Code in their native language rather they are motivated to do so when they see people around them doing so.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Section A: Reasons to Switch and Mix English Code

I switch and mix English Code:	Yes	No
to convey my message effectively		
to influence the listener		
to pose better social class		
to exclude third person		
while forgetting any term in my own language		
while directly quoting someone's exact words		
while some alternate term is not present in my own language		
while getting emotional		
while showing my extreme annoyance with someone		
because I like this language		
because this language is better than my own language		
because I am motivated to do so as I find majority of people around me doing so		
because it is a global language and has variety of functions to perform in all contexts		
because it is the need of the hour		
because I am forced to do so by my elders		

Section B: Contexts to Switch and Mix English Code

I switch and mix English code:	YES	NO
during classroom/lab activities		
when I am with my friends at canteen		
when I converse with my teachers		
when I talk to opposite sex		
when I am at home		
when I am at market place		
when I am on phone call		
when I am in library with my friends		
when I am discussing some subject-related topic with my friends		
when I am talking to a stranger in a bus		
when I am discussing something personal		
when there is a foreigner at my department		
when I am chatting on skype, facebook etc.		
when I am sending a text message		
when I am participating in a national/international workshop/seminar		
when I am out for dinners, shopping, tours, meetings, clinical examination etc.		
when I am surfing on internet		
when I am writing personal diary, reminders, notes, mails etc.		

Appendix B

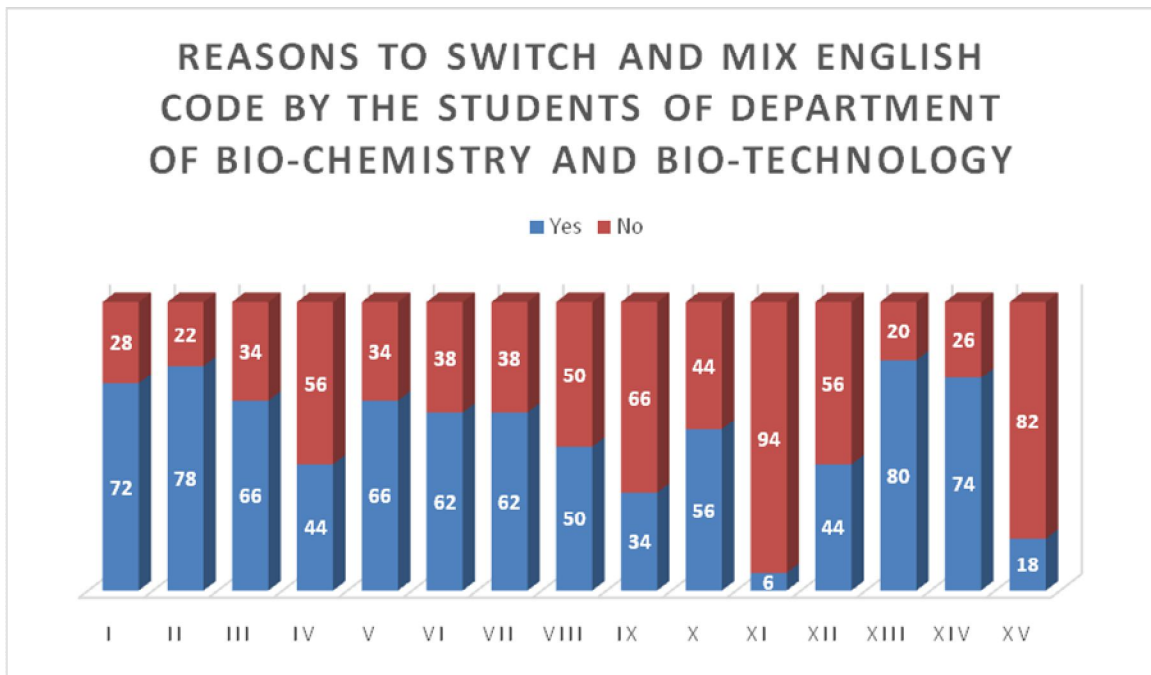


Figure 4.1

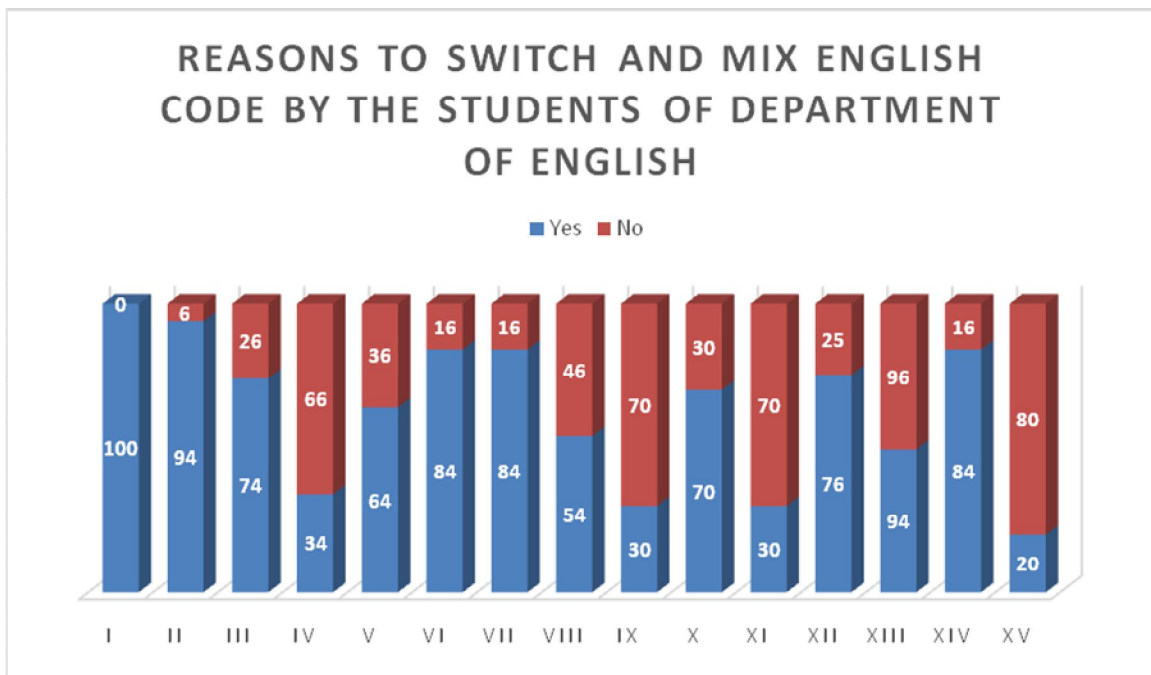


Figure 4.2

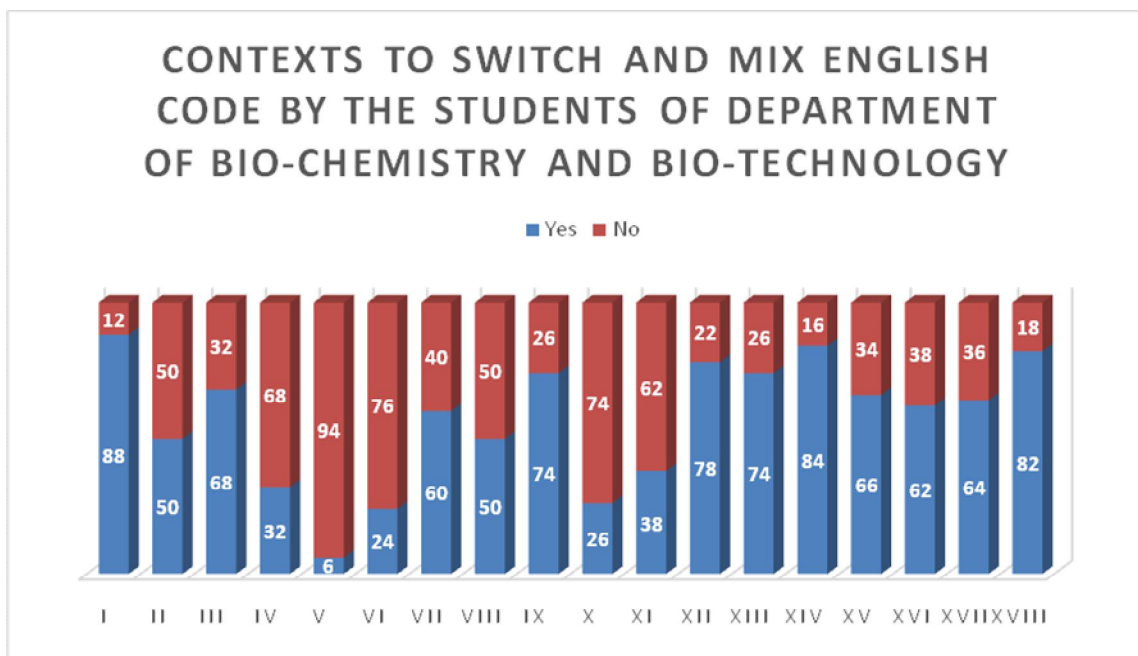


Figure 4.3

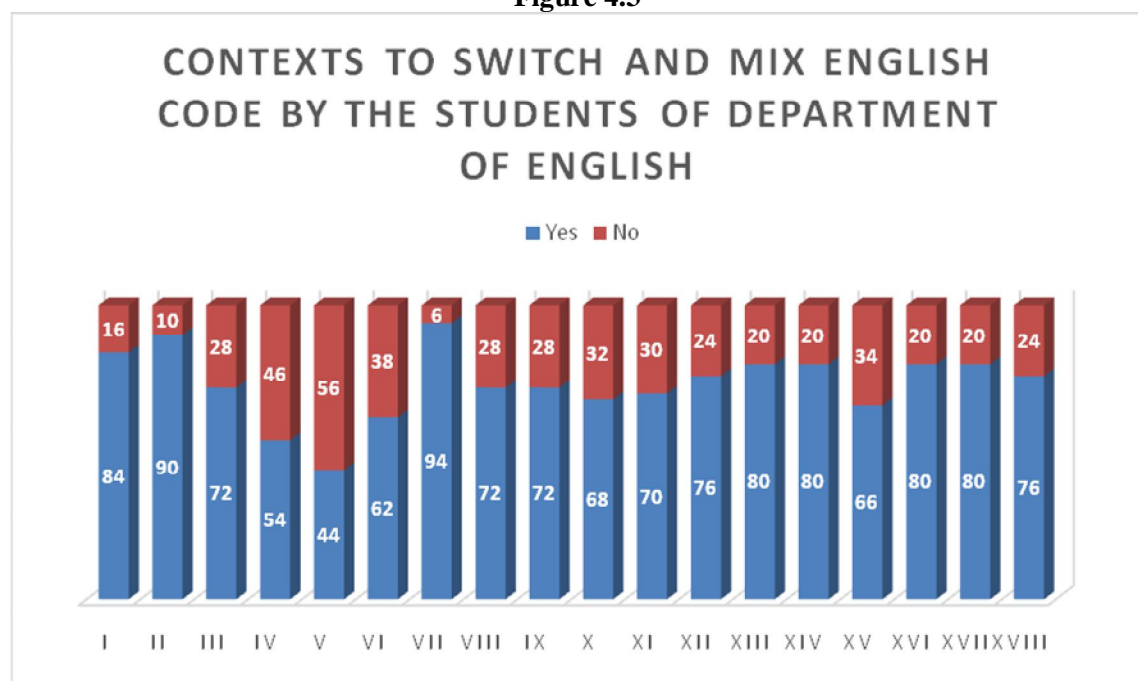


Figure 4.4