RESEARCH ARTICLE

FACTORS INFLUENCING CODE-MIXING AND CODE-SWITCHING IN KHASI AND JAIÑTIA HILLS

Dr. ESTHER TALANG-RAO

Associate Professor, Department of English, Spicer Adventist University, Aundh Road, Ganeshkhind, Pune 411067

Email: esthertrao@gmail.com

Abstract

The study reported in this research article scrutinizes the factors which influence code mixing and code switching in Khasi and Jaiñtia hills among the Khasi-English bilingual speakers. The data collected for this study were through a one on one, face to face interview, and a digital voice recording was used to record the conversations, both participation and non-participation. The data were analysed by means of raw frequency and percentages. The finding of the study revealed that technology is the main factor that influences the speakers to mix and switch between Khasi and English languages. Other findings from this study provide detailed insights as to why the Khasi speakers are mixing and switching so much in their day to day conversations especially among the younger speakers.

Keywords: Attitude, Factors, Code mixing, Code switching, Khasi, Reasons

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this article is on the factors influencing Code mixing (CM) and Code switching (CS) it is based on the investigation in Khasi and Jaiñtia hills, in the state of Meghalaya which is situated in the North Eastern part of India.

The word 'Khasi' refers to the people, language, and place. The Khasis speak Khasi in Khasi hills. Khasi is a minor and lesser known language and it seems that not much research has been done on code mixing and code switching.

Khasi came in "direct" contact with English in 1813 when the Christian Missionaries came to the Northeast, Assam, under the leadership of William Carey. And later on in 1833 under the leadership of Rev.Thomas Jones and his men who came to Shillong and set their headquarters in Sohra/Cherrapunji. Jones established schools and put the Khasi language in a written form in the Latin alphabet. The children and adults were first taught in Khasi and then in English (Kommaluri et. al., 2005; Gruessner, 2004).

The progress of education of both males and females was remarkable. It was noted that the Khasis learned to speak, read, and write in English much higher than the other districts of Assam (Bamon, 2004). Today, Khasi-English contact is through school, college, and university which according to Loveday (1996) is a "distant" contact.

After the missionaries and the British left India, English continues to grow in Meghalaya. However, there was hardly any code mixing (CM) and code switching (CS). It was only in the last ten to fifteen years back especially when the new communication technologies become available in the state that Khasi people started mixing and

switching from Khasi to English and English to Khasi. As a result of this, today, there is a lot of CM and CS among the Khasi speakers.

SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of this research article is that it reveals the main factors which influence CM and CS among the Khasi speakers and the other factors or reasons which are also related to the previous work of other writers/researchers of different languages.

METHODOLOGY

The sample size for this study consists of 144 participants; both young and old, males and females, and different occupational groups. The interview was a one-on-one or face-to-face semi-structured interview in the form of informal conversation. "The classic method of sociolinguistic research is the one-on-one tape-recorded conversational interview (Labov 1972a, 1984; Wolfram and Fasold 1974)" (as cited in Feagin, 2004, p. 26). Today, of course, a tape recorder is history. For this research, a Sony Voice Recording Device was used during the conversational interview with the consent of the respondents. To analyse the data the researcher has used descriptive analysis such as utterances of words and sentences and also both raw frequencies and percentages in order to be very reader friendly. Brown and Rodgers (2003) found out that some people find the actual raw frequencies clearer while some others prefer percentages, so they suggest that it is best to report in frequencies as well as percentages.

RELATED LITERATURE

There are numerous definitions by different writers and scholars for the terms CM and CS and it can be quite confusing at times for the novice readers and researchers. Milroy and Muysken (1995) have commented that "the field of code switching research is replete with a confusing range of terms" (p. 12). It is believed that the oldest definition of code switching was by Weinreich (1953). According to him, "the ideal bilingual switches from one language to the other according to appropriate changes in speech situation

(interlocutors, topic, etc.) but not in an unchanged speech situation, and certainly not within a single sentence" (p. 73). Walwadkar (2013) opines that it is "difficult to maintain the difference between CM and CS" (p. 47). Gumperz (1982) defines code switching as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems" (p. 59).

Kachru (1978) and Singh (1985) refer to single word switches as 'code mixing', while Auer (1995) refers to single word switches as "transfer" or "insertion" to distinguish code mixing from code switching (as cited in Winford 2003, p. 105). However, most of the researchers and scholars agree with the terms 'intrasentential' which is a single switch word within a sentence and 'intersentential' a switch between sentences. (Kak & Wani, 2009).

The present researcher agrees with Kachru (1978), Singh (1985), and Kak & Wani, (2009); she defines code mixing as an intrasentential switch; that is, when a speaker inserts a single word from another language within a sentence while he is speaking in his own language. For example, *šane ka long* **dry** *bha, ym don slap.* (It is very dry here, there is no rain.) And code switching is an intersentential switch; that is, when a speaker switches clauses/sentences from Khasi to English and vice versa. Such as, *ŋan ym wan mynta ka sŋi;* I have no transport. (I will not come today; I have no transport).

The terms factors, reasons, functions, and purposes are used by different writers and researchers for the same/similar points and findings. Some of these factors/reasons of CM and CS as stated by established writers and research scholars are as follows:

"To show identity with a group, to address different audiences, lack of facility, pragmatic reasons, lack of registral competence, semantics significance, to attract attention, habitual expressions, to amplify and emphasize a point, and mood of the speakers". (M. Hadei, V.C. Kumar, and K.S. Jie (2016). To talk about a particular topic; for example, in Singapore "English language is used to

Dr. ESTHER TALANG-RAO

discuss trade or business matter." (Gardner-Chloros, (2009). To quote someone's word/s and sometimes these quotes are "famous expressions, proverbs or sayings of some well-known figures." To use interjection when conveying strong emotion, such as, "Dompetku Ketinggalan di taksi! *Shitt!* (My wallet was left in the taxi!)" example from Indonesian to English.   "To soften or strengthen a point/an idea; code mixing and code switching can also function as a request or command usually from L1 to L2, , and to exclude someone from a conversation" (Cakrawarti, 2011, pp. 15-17). To repeat in the other language exactly to clarify or amplify a point. "Keep straight, Sidha jao" (Gumperz, 1982, p.78). This is English to Hindi. Furthermore, in pragmatic function of CS Gumperz (1982) has given a second sequence of switching from Hindi to English- "Baju me jao beta, undar mat (go to the side son, not inside) Keep to the side!" The first sequence is the 'we' code that signifies "a personal appeal". The second one is the 'they' code suggesting "a warning or mild threat" (pp. 91-92). To specify a speaker involvement since some notions perhaps are simply easier and better to express in one language than the other. Also it sounds better or English is "euphemistically softer and less degrading" (Kak & Wani, 2009, p. 315) than other word in another language. "…to fill a lexical gap in the other language" is one of the many different conversational functions of code switching. (Thomason, 2001, p. 132). A speaker's choice of linguistics varieties is influenced by many factors which are quite complicated to understand. For instance, the different context of the situation when the interaction takes place, the physical setting when and where the speech takes place, and the subject/topic of the discussion can result in code switching. Therefore, sometimes the switching is known as the situational code switching. Code switch can also take place to express solidarity. Yet another reason for switching is effective function which depends on emotions (www.ello.ousde/field.php/sociolinguistics/centralfactors).

FINDINGS

To investigate the factors influencing CM and CS or the increase use of English, an open-ended question was asked to the respondents if the use of English language is increasing in Meghalaya. And if yes, what could be the factors. It is noted from their answer that 100 percent of all age groups and genders and occupational groups expressed that English language is increasing in Meghalaya by leaps and bounds.

The informants expressed and emphasized their viewpoints about the various factors. According to Dörnyei, (2007, p.38) "Qualitative research is concerned with subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals and thus the explicit goal of research is to explore the participants' views of the situation being studied…. It is only the actual participants themselves who can reveal the meanings and interpretations of their experiences and actions."

The following are some of the examples from the informants' recorded, actual speech: the translation is given inside the round brackets ( ).

1. *"ki* factors *ka loŋ ka* education, mobile*, bad* computer *ruɔ; taŋba ka* television *dei kawei kaba ktaɔ eɔ, ha* town *ha noŋkyndoŋ* rural *ia baroɔ ki khynnaɔ ki tymmen ka* television *ka ktaɔ lut nadoŋ šadoŋ ia baroɔ, kumno ŋi kren bad ŋi im mynta…"* (the factors are education, mobile, and computer also; but television is the one that influences us the most, in towns as well as rural areas; young and old, television has the greatest influence on all of us in the way we speak and live.) This informant put a lot of emphasis on the television as the main factor that influences code mixing and code switching.

2. "actually *dei namar ki* new technology, *ki* use Cable T.V., computer, mobile *bad*

    English *skul ruɔ* that's why…"

    (actually it is because of the new technologies, people use Cable T.V., computer, mobile, and English schools also that's why…).

3. "*namar mynta ki roi bha kine, er lyŋba ki* music*, lane lyŋba* T.V. channel, *lyŋba ki kot ki sla ha* school *ha* college... *khamtam ruɔ*

Dr. ESTHER TALANG-RAO

lyŋba ka mobile *ruɔ. kane ka* technology *kaba* spread *kumno ŋi naŋ bha ia ka ktien* English." (because nowadays there are a lot of these, through music, or through T.V. channel, through books in school in college…especially, through mobile also. Technology is the one that spreads how we can really know how to speak English.)

A doctor stated that technology is one of the factors that influence code mixing; also people hear and copy (imitate) from each other. She narrated that though she is educated, her patients mix and switch more than her and that too often times playfully and figuratively or idiomatically. Many of the words they use for mixing belong to the register of mobile and internet. The following are the exact lines used by her patients:

4. A. "*o doktor ymdon* link *šuɔ, ymdon* network *šuɔ".*(oh doctor there is no more link, there is no more network). [Literally, it means, oh doctor I don't understand your explanation anymore.]

B. *"u tei laɔ* down battery *hap* recharge *noɔ".*

(his battery is down he needs to be recharged.) [In a literal sense it means that when someone is weak physically he needs vitamin/medicine to become strong.]

C. "*ŋa joŋ namar ki* download *ia ŋa ha ka por ba don* load shedding". (I am black because they downloaded me at the time when there was load shedding.)

5. " *ka daw ka loŋ ba kat naŋ miɔ ki sŋi, ki skul ki naŋ miɔ, er, ka* standard *ka phareŋ ruɔ ka la naŋkiew naŋkiew; mynshwa kynmaw ŋim naŋ ban kren*   English, *ynda laɔ leit skul hi laɔ poi ka skul* standard *ki* youth *mynta ki sŋi ki* mix, *lada kim* mix *te ym lah hi ban kren beit, ki don ki ktien kiba eɔ ban lap ha ka ktien* Khasi…*ka daw ruɔ ka loŋ na ki* mobile, computer, laptop…" (the reason is as the days are progressing, so also there are more standard English   schools, the standard use

of English is also increasing; before, I remember we did not know how to speak English but when we went to English school we learned; the youth nowadays mix Khasi and English a lot, if they don't mix they will not be   able to speak smoothly and continuously there are words which are hard to find in Khasi, also the reasons is because of mobile, computer, laptop…).

6. "modernization is one of the reason *ba ka phareŋ ka roi bha ha* Meghalaya *ki*   English music ,T.V., *oh byllai!"*   (modernization is one of the reasons that English is increasing so much in Meghalaya, English music, T.V. oh lots!)

7. " *ka phareŋ ka roi šibun* nowadays *namar ki briew ki la kham šai, kham stad, kham riewspaɔ ban ia mynshwa. Mynta laɔ miɔ ki* TV, mobile, computer *bad ki* use *bun ki* words *ba dei na ka ktien* English *ki ioɔsŋew ki bud iwei na iwei* people like to talk in English *oh ha* Shillong *leilei te!"* (English is increasing nowadays people are more educated and T.V., mobile, computer have become available and they use many words from the   English language they hear and follow from one another, people like to talk in English, oh especially in Shillong!).

8*. "kine ki* technology *ki briew ruɔ ki loŋ* more educated". (these technologies the people also have become more educated).

9. "*ki briew ki* mix *bha mynta ki ioɔi ki ioɔsŋew na* T.V. *ki pynbud ŋa ŋa* try *ban* avoid *ban khleɔ* Khasi and English *taŋba* the time has change *te…"* (people mix all the time; they see, they hear from the T.V. they imitate, I try to avoid mixing but the time has changed…).

Having examined the elaborative answers of the informants, the researcher learned that there are three main factors influencing code switches in Meghalaya among the Khasi people and has summed them up/summarised them as follows:

The number one factor is technology (television, mobile phones, computer, laptop, tab,

iPad). The informants expressed themselves that television influences them the most.

All the informants, 144 (100%) have stated that for the last few years almost every family owns a TV and a computer or a laptop, almost everyone if not all has his own mobile phone/smart phone, and many possess a tab or an iPad of their own. These new technologies are found useful because they serve the needs of the people. Some students stated that today many people work by using new technologies, for example, in 'graphic design' they just put their idea and they get beautiful images and also they can keep a constant touch with their supervisors, peers, family, and friends.

Many smart phone users, especially the younger people access their smart phones with their various applications to the internet and they can chat on Facebook, whatsApp, capture pictures and videos, they can also at the same time send (or share) them via Bluetooth with their friends. They can also play games and needless to say they use SMS, listening to music, jokes and so on. Hence, they spend a lot of time on the communication technologies and the language they use on all these activities is mostly English. Because of this constant touch with English they pick up many English words and expressions and they mix and switch to English even when they speak to each other in Khasi.

The number two factor is education. Out of 144 respondents, 83 (58%) of them stated that education plays an important role. Learners in schools and colleges are encouraged to speak only in English. And some not only encouraged but compel students to speak in English even in the hostel or anywhere in the campus. Many Khasi teachers speak entirely in English to students in and out of the classroom. When students go to any office (Principal's, Headmistress' etc.) they are expected to speak in English. Schools in the rural areas used to be taught in Khasi medium, but lately, there are some English medium schools even in the rural areas and the medium of instruction is only in English from class I. One of the teachers who teaches both Science and Maths stated that inside the classroom they use only English, they don't use Khasi at all, even in lower classes they use only English. Thabor (2012), Professor of Education, Shillong College wrote about "the mushrooming of English schools and colleges in the state in and around Shillong city…. much sought for by the students from all over North East region – this clearly reflects the quality of the education" (p. 1). A student stated that today students know how to speak English because of standard [modern] English schools.

The third factor which the data revealed, 61 (42%), is the social psychological perspective and prestige (SPPP) of the English language. SPPP refers to the way the Khasis think and view the English language in their social life; it shows their positive attitude towards English. The researcher was informed by the informants that when a Khasi speaker switches to English, it signifies a good impression of competence and prestige – good reputation which is a social psychological factor. When in a process of conversation someone inserts an English word into a Khasi sentence, for instance, when the leader of the football team after playing says, "*ŋi* enjoy *bha mynta ka sŋi"* (we really enjoyed today) or "look! *katai ka dur*" (look! that picture.) The words "enjoy" and "look" are used by two or three people at first, followed by ten, fifty, and slowly the words are spread to the whole community (some speakers , of course, still use the Khasi words). They hear and follow from each other. Similarly, many English content words are picked up by someone from someone or from the T.V. and then use them in conversation and others imitate and use them the same. Some parents force their children to speak in English so they and the other siblings can pick up some English. This shows the social psychological perspective of the people and the prestige of the English language.

Bamon (2004) has conducted a study on the role of English in Khasi and Jaiñtia hills and has found out that the Khasis have a very positive attitude about the English people and their language. Language attitude may be explained as to how a person feels about his own language or the languages of other people. He opines that the Khasi people openly express their keen desire to learn English. "In fact, the motivation to learn English and the favourable attitude displayed by the Khasis

Dr. ESTHER TALANG-RAO

was so intense that as early as 1911 it was noted that the percentage of people who could read and write in English was higher in the Khasi hills than in any other district of Assam, English continues, to be till date, the official language of the state. It is the working language, the language of education, the interethnic lingua and is the symbol of elitism and prestige" (Bamon, 2004, ¶ 18). He has also found out that the people " have more favourable attitudes towards English rather than Hindi; the English local news broadcasts and English songs are more listened to, than either Hindi or even the local Khasi dialect. English dailies have a wider circulation, and English films and T.V. serials are a popular pastime and entertainment to almost all age groups" (ibid. ¶ 19).

In fact, one of the questions asked during the data collection was, what language they prefer to watch TV; lo and behold out of 144 respondents, 111 (77%) prefer to watch only English Channels!

The other factors /reasons the data revealed in this research article are as follows:

1. The informants mix or switch because it is easier or faster to find words in English. Sometimes it is hard to find words in Khasi. So they mix or switch to English to fill in a lexical gap.

2. Quoting someone's words or lines is another reason found in the study. "*a re*, disconnect *u oŋ*, 'you should have at least one rupee in your main balance.' *to ap ŋan leit* recharge *haŋtei dukan"*. ("ah re, disconnect he said, 'you should have at least one rupee in your main balance' ok wait I will go and recharge there in the shop").

3. Another reason for mixing and switching to English depends on the subject or topic of interaction. The data revealed that some of the occupational groups (musicians and housewives) emphasised that they switched to English all the time when they speak about certain topics or subjects for instance, music, baking, and stitching but when they speak to their friends and family members they switch only sometimes.   A musician stated that for

him mixing and switching depends on the subject that he speaks. With friends and family he mixes English words into Khasi only sometimes but when he teaches music, he has to mix and switch to English all the time. Here is an extract of his speech:

 "*ka* depend *ruɔ ha ki* subject *ba ŋi kren*, *peit mo,* if I explain about the song, *kum ka* time signature and the beats, *ŋa* use English *namar ka loŋ* easy. *ŋa hap hi ban oŋ* two four, three four or four four and then show the pulse by clapping the hands *dei ban* clap *shwa, shwa ban tem khamtam ban* mark *ia ki* strong beats. *Ban batai da* Khasi *ruɔ laɔ hi* but it is much easier to explain in English".

(It depends on the subject that he speaks, he asserted that he could explain in Khasi about the time signature and the beats of a song; however it is easy to use English because it is easy to illustrate the terms- two four, three four, four four and then show the pulse by clapping the hands and counting before playing especially to mark the strong beats, therefore, for music it is much easier to explain in English).

4. Repetition of a phrase and a clause for clarification or emphasis are also found in this study for example, "*taŋ katto* only this much" and "*kito kiba don pisa* those who have money".   A phrase or a clause is uttered in Khasi and then the exact phrase or clause is repeated in English.

5. Function and emotion is another reason for CS. An informant said that they speak most of the time in their mother tongue at home; but occasionally, when their mother is angry with them, she shouts and scolds them in English.

6. When the English word is not available is another reason for code mixing. When the Khasi people speak in English they insert a Khasi word into the English sentence because there is no word in English. These words are mainly food items such as, "I really like *soɔphi* (name of a fruit) pickle"

Dr. ESTHER TALANG-RAO

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we can see that this article has revealed the three main factors that influence the Khasi speakers to mix and switch from Khasi to English and vice versa are technology, education, and social psychological perspective and prestige of the English language. The attitude of the Khasi people towards the English language has been very positive. This research article has also shown the other factors and reasons which are similar to what other writers and researchers have found out in other speakers of different languages.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

CM: code mixing
CS: code switching
( ): parentheses are also used for translation
¶: paragraph number, for electronic sources that do not have page numbers
[ ]: square brackets are used to enclose words which are not directly spoken by the original speaker. They are words/explanations of the present author

REFERENCES

Bamon, T. K. (2004). The English Text: Establishing Identity. E. News-letter. Retrieved from http://megh-ac.nic.in on July 18, 2010.

Brown, J. D., & Rodgers, T.S. (2003). *Doing Second Language Research* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford Uni. Press.

Central Factors Involved in Code-switching. Retrieved from www.ello.ous.de/field.php/sociolinguistics/centralfactors on May 26, 2020

Cakrawarti, D. A. (March 2011). Analysis of Code Switching and Code Mixing in the Teenlit Canting Cantig. Ph.D. Thesis Abstract. Retrieved from http://enprints.undip- ac.id on Nov. 4, 2013.

Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics.* Oxford: Oxford Uni. Press.

Hadei, M.,Kumar, V.C., & Jie, K.S. (2016). Social Factors for Code-Switching- a Study of Malaysian-English Bilingual Speaker. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics.* Retrieved from http://www.sciencepublishinggroup.com on April 20, 2020.

Feagin, C. (2004). Entering the Community: Fieldwork. In J. K. Chambers, P. Trudgil, & N. Schilling-Estes (Eds.), *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change* (pp. 20- 39). Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.Gardner–Chloros, P. (2009). *Code-Switching.* Cambridge: Cambridge Uni. Press.

Gruessner, K. H. (2004). Khasi a Minority Language of North East India: from an unwritten to a Written Language. *18th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, Sweden.* Retrieved from http://megh-ac.nic.in/herit on Dec. 7, 2010.

Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kak, A. A., & Wani, S. H. (2009). Code Switching, Code Mixing. In M. A. Vyas & Y. L. Patel (Eds.), *Teaching English as a Second Language* (pp.309-318). New Delhi: PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.

Kommaluri, V., Subramanian, R., & Sagar, A. K. (2005). Issues in Morphological Analysis of North-East Indian Languages. Edited by M. S. Thirumalai et al. Retrieved from http://www.languageinindia.com on June 26, 2020.

Milroy, L., & Muysken, P. (Eds.). (1995). *One Speaker, Two Languages: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Code-Switching*. Cambridge: Cambridge Uni. Press.

Talang-Rao, E. (2017). Khasi-English Code Mixing and Code Switching in Khasi and Jaiñtia Hills, Meghalaya. Unpublished Ph D Thesis, Deccan College.

Thabor, R. (Aug. 27, 2012). The Rise and Fall of Education in Meghalaya. Retrieved from meghalayatimes.info on June 22, 2020.

Thomason, S. G. (2001). *Language Contact*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Uni. Press Ltd.

Walwadkar, S.B. (2013). Chapter II approaches Towards Code Mixing and Code Switching. Retrieved from http:/ir.inflibnet.ac.in:8080/jspui/handle/10603/10027 on July 24, 2015.

Weinreich, U. (1953). *Language in Contact.* New York: Linguistics Circles of New York.

Winford, D. (2003). *An Introduction to Contact Linguistics.* Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing.

Dr. ESTHER TALANG-RAO