

MULTILINGUALISM AND LANGUAGE DYNAMICS IN BAPSI SIDHWA'S '*BREAKING IT UP*': A STUDY OF LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT

¹Sadaf Rasheed, ²Khush Bakht, ³Dr Haniya Munir

¹MPhil Scholar, Department of English, The Women University, Multan, Punjab,
Pakistan

²MPhil Scholar, Department of English, The Women University, Multan, Punjab,
Pakistan

³Lecturer, Department of English, The Women University, Multan, Punjab,
Pakistan

Corresponding Email ID: munirjahangir786@gmail.com

Abstract

This research paper explores the trends of language maintenance and language shift within the short story "American Brat" by Bapsi Sidhwa. The story provides a rich narrative depicting the cultural and linguistic dynamics experienced by immigrants, particularly focusing on the protagonist's struggle to maintain her native language while adapting to a new cultural environment. Through a comprehensive analysis, this paper aims to uncover patterns of language maintenance and language shift within the story, shedding light on the factors influencing these linguistic phenomena. The study is qualitative in nature and through the deep content analysis and a little corpus analysis that is used to measure the frequency of english words used by protagonist, the study concludes that the story is filled with linguistic choices by the writer that are prominent as they are for drawing cultural identity of characters and their trials to maintain their native language. It also explores the cultural influences that lead them to adopt a new language such as language shift. The study also determines the greater trends of language shift such as prominent from the character of Feroza.

Keywords: Code Switching, Language Maintenance, Language Shift, Multilingualism

Introduction

Language is not only a means of communication but also a crucial aspect of identity, culture, and social interaction. Language maintenance and shift refer to the ongoing processes by which a community or individual either preserves their native language or adopts another language due to various factors that can be social, cultural, economic, or political factors.

The phenomena of language maintenance and language shift is in a relationship that can bring a change or stability in the use of language (Fishman, 1964). We can call it a kind of ongoing psychological phenomena that involves social and cultural processes when different populations speaking different languages come into contact with one another. Language Maintenance can be defined as a phenomenon or situation in which the utility of a language is maintained even under some pressure guided by the degree of resistance over pressure that may come from a language that is dominating the other one (Batibo, 2005). Language has strategies that we call as assimilation, which is simulation that are linked to the strategies of language that cause the reproduction of language adopted by groups and individuals or we can say as the phenomena of language maintenance (Riagain, 2010). Language shift and language maintenance are the outcomes of dynamics of language in which a language is recreated, reconstituted, innovated and

the imperfections of one language over another one gives rise to language change and if the change occurs it is what we know as language shift. If a language continues to pass down to the next generations then it is maintained (Ostler, 2011). The language will be called or passed through the process of language shift when some languages are partially in endangered mint with a continuous population when it will get a position where it becomes a replaced language.

"American Brat" is a novel by Bapsi Sidhwa that explores the cultural and generational conflicts experienced by a Parsi family from Pakistan when their teenage daughter, Feroza Ginwalla, is sent to the United States. The story begins with Feroza's conservative upbringing in Lahore, where her family becomes increasingly concerned about her traditionalist views. To broaden her perspective, her mother, Zareen, decides to send her to America to live with her uncle, Manek. Once in the United States, Feroza encounters a vastly different world that challenges her preconceptions and cultural norms. She grapples with her identity as she adapts to American life, experiencing both the freedom and the isolation that come with living in a foreign country. Feroza's transformation is marked by her struggle to reconcile her Parsi heritage with the liberal values of American society.

Throughout her journey, Feroza confronts issues of gender roles, religious identity, and personal independence. She forms new relationships, navigates cultural misunderstandings, and ultimately grows into a more self-assured and independent individual. However, this transformation creates a rift between her and her family back in Pakistan, highlighting the complexities of cultural assimilation and the challenges faced by immigrants in preserving their heritage while embracing new identities. The story poignantly captures the immigrant experience, exploring themes of identity, cultural conflict, and the quest for self-discovery in a rapidly changing world.

It offers a rich ground in which we can explore the dynamics of language, language maintenance and language shift within immigrant communities. Bapsi Sidhwa is known as a prominent Pakistani-American writer who often gives insights into the grand themes of identity, cultural clashes, and a wide view of the immigrant experience. This research paper aims to analyze the trends of language maintenance and language shift within the context of this story, examining how language functions as a marker of identity and cultural adaptation.

Research Problem

The research problem addressed in this study is the investigation of patterns of language maintenance and language shift within the context of Bapsi Sidhwa's short story "American Brat." Specifically, this study aims to understand how characters' linguistic behaviors reflect broader trends in language use that will cause the phenomena of language shift and language maintenance among immigrant communities and the factors influencing these behaviors.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the specific instances of code-switching in "American Brat" and analyze their significance in the context of language maintenance and shift.
2. To examine the role of cultural and familial pressures in shaping the characters' linguistic choices and how these pressures contribute to either language maintenance or shift.

Research Questions

1. What are the patterns of code-switching observed in "American Brat," and how do these patterns reflect the tension between language maintenance and shift?
2. How do cultural and familial influences impact the characters' decisions to either maintain their native language or shift to English in "American Brat"?

Delimitation of research

This research is delimited to the analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa's short story "American Brat," focusing exclusively on the linguistic behaviors of the characters within this narrative. The study does not include Sidhwa's other works or the works of other authors. Additionally, this research centers on the qualitative aspects of language maintenance and shift, particularly through instances of code-switching and the influence of cultural and familial pressures without including quantitative data analysis or empirical sociolinguistic fieldwork. This focus allows for a detailed and in-depth examination of the literary representation of language dynamics, providing insights specific to the context of "American Brat."

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provides a nuanced understanding of language maintenance and shift within the context of Bapsi Sidhwa's "American Brat," particularly through the analysis of code-switching and the impact of cultural and familial pressures on linguistic choices. By exploring these dynamics, the research highlights the intricate balance immigrant characters navigate between preserving their native language and assimilating into a new cultural environment. These insights contribute to both literary analysis and sociolinguistics by illustrating how literature can reflect real-world linguistic phenomena. Additionally, the study's findings have practical implications for educators and policymakers in developing strategies to support bilingualism and cultural integration, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and understanding society. By examining "American Brat" through the lens of language maintenance and shift, it shows how literary texts can provide valuable insights into real-world linguistic phenomena, enriching our understanding of how language functions within different cultural contexts.

Literature Review

Language maintenance and shift are the main concepts in the study of language with respect to society especially within immigrant communities. Language maintenance refers to the preservation of a heritage language or L1 within a community, while the phenomena of language shift happens when speakers adopt a new language (L2), often due to social, economic, or political pressures. Previous research on Sidhwa's works has highlighted her use of language as a tool to explore the nuances of cultural and linguistic identity. In "Cracking India," for instance, Sidhwa depicts the linguistic landscape of pre-Partition India, where multiple languages can coexist but are also indicative of social and cultural divides. This background provides a foundation for understanding how language functions in "American Brat." Studies by Fishman (1966) and Giles (1977) have highlighted various factors influencing language maintenance and shift, including generational differences, societal attitudes, and language policies.

A study determines the trends of language shift and language maintenance with respect to the Indonesian community. In their case study, they study language shift and decreased trends in Javanese language and the influences that led to an increased use of Indonesian language in both formal and informal contexts as *Basha resmi* and *Basha sehari-hari*. (Ravindranath, 2014) They concluded that a language with large speaker populations can be endangered and shifted out. The evidence from Javanese suggests that size alone will not lead to language maintenance and thus patterns of language shift are here (Anderbeck and Gorontalo, 2012).

A study on language maintenance and language shift as strategies of social reproduction was conducted by Riagain, 2010. The study explores that language strategies that include the concept of (Bourdieu, 1991) dissimilation and assimilation are important to know and these are

the things that are responsible for social reproduction among individuals and groups. District consequences mein agar due to social changes and fly migration changing occupations, prestigious jobs, high educations and some other. Different patterns of introductions such as caused by some external pressure or opportunities cause language shifts that will cause reproduction of language.

In the context of literature, scholars like Spolsky (2004) and Pavlenko (2002) have explored how language is portrayed in fictional works and its role in constructing characters' identities. Works such as "The Namesake" by Jhumpa Lahiri and "The Joy Luck Club" by Amy Tan have been analyzed for their depictions of language dynamics in immigrant families. However, there is a gap in research regarding Bapsi Sidhwa's "American Brat," which provides an opportunity to explore language maintenance and shift in the Pakistani-American context.

Theoretical Framework

This research uses the framework of language maintenance and shift theory proposed by Fishman (1967) and Lambert (1972). According to this framework, language maintenance occurs when a community continues to use its native language, while language shift occurs when a community adopts a new language, often due to socio-economic or political pressures. The framework also incorporates the concept of code-switching as a pragmatic strategy employed by bilingual individuals. Code-switching can serve as a tool for balancing linguistic demands of different social contexts, thereby reflecting both language maintenance and shift. In "American Brat," instances of code-switching highlight the characters' adaptive strategies and their attempts to negotiate their bilingual identities.

Methods and Materials

This study employs a qualitative approach to analyze the linguistic and cultural aspects of "American Brat." Close reading and textual analysis techniques are used to identify instances of language maintenance and shift within the narrative. Key passages from the story that are relevant and illustrate significant linguistic and cultural dynamics are selected for analysis. These passages are chosen based on their relevance to the research objectives and thematic richness. Data collection involves extracting lines from the text that feature dialogue, code mixing or switching in narration, or descriptions related to language and identity. These excerpts are then analyzed in detail to identify linguistic patterns that ultimately lead to our conclusions towards language maintenance and language shift.

Analysis

Fishman's (1967) model emphasizes the role of societal and familial support in maintaining a native language. Factors such as community networks, cultural practices, and intergenerational transmission play crucial roles in preserving linguistic heritage. When these support structures are robust, language maintenance is more likely to occur. For instance, in immigrant communities, local institutions like religious centers, cultural associations, and ethnic schools contribute significantly to the continuity of the native language. Language maintenance is done thorough talking back in one's native language through the phenomena of code switching that can be seen in the text of "American Brat" by many characters that are being discussed over there and the use of many words that are taken from the native language such as Parsi, Urdu and Punjabi. In Bapsi Sidhwa's "An American Brat," several characters exhibit language maintenance, holding onto their native language and linguistic habits despite being in a different cultural environment. Here are the key characters who show notable language maintenance and how they do so.

In the story, Feroza Ginwalla undergoes a profound journey of linguistic adaptation and preservation, experiencing both language shift and maintenance as she navigates the cultural

landscape of the United States that is a 'civilized' nation and different from the 'Uncivilized Pakistani environment'. As Menk asks her, "Why is Pakistan so backward?" (pg. 77).. And in reply Feroza replied; "Are we stuck in the Middle Ages because we were colonized? Because we are illiterate? Because we don't have enough technology to make atom bombs?" (pg. 77). It is a central theme in the narrative, reflecting her struggle to balance her Pakistani heritage with the demands of assimilating into American society. She initially arrived in the U.S. with a strong foundation in Urdu and Parsi Gujarati, the languages spoken in her native Pakistan. "As the taxi drove out of Kennedy Airport, speaking in Gujarati Manek said, "You're the same old **uloo**" (pg, 67). At another point she said, "**Vekh! Vekh! Sher-di-batian!**" Feroza said in exuberant Punjabi, mimicking excited yokels pointing out the bright city lights from bullock carts." Another place where we can see the switching of Urdu language is obvious from the point then meant to set Feroza to keep quiet in the following words; "**Choop kar,**" Manek hissed into Feroza's ear, warning his niece to shut up (pg, 68). The use of Urdu Language in intersentential code mixing can be obvious as; "Zareen fetched his **pajamas** and slippers from the dressing room". (pg,03). Urdu and English are obvious from the word pajamas and debate in the same sentence. It shows that language shift and language maintenance is going on simultaneously. The reference of Parsi religion again and again in the text is also another spotted point in the maintenance of one's language, culture and identity towards they are native land such as in the line: "I told her 'Look, we're **Parsee**, everybody knows we dress differently". (pg,13). The maintenance of Urdu language in the line; "I was chatting with Mother Superior on the **veranda**" (pg, 13). Lines like "Can she wear frocks? No. Women mustn't show their legs, women shouldn't dress like this, and women shouldn't act like that." and 'Girls mustn't play **hockey** or sing or dance!' (pg,14). Are Again direct reference to once cultural identity such as Asian people they don't allow their girls to wear dresses like Western people and their girls cannot openly play hockey and they live in a circle of **Izzat**.

The conversations between Zarine and her husband Cyrus is often ends a kind of code switching and codemixing among to languages such as **Gujarati** and **English** as the both have some dual personalities one of Western and second is Asian but there attempts to maintain Court mixing in both languages is showing language maintenance and language shift at the same time. The line ; I had removed my **cardigan**. is in support of language shift purely. The attempts to maintain cultural identities are obvious in the line such as, If everything corrupts their pious

little minds so easily, then the **mullahs** should wear **burqas** and stay within the four walls of their houses! (pg, 13). Mulla is a word that is used for the religious and scholarly persons of the Islam religion and thus again a religious stress that is used by the girls of Muslim community to hide themselves from the unknown persons and the four walls of their house it's again a try to maintain one's religious identity such as Muslim girls are not allowed to wonder outside their houses without any work and they are sports to stay in their homes and not to meet any unknown person. "You remember when he told the women in **Peshawar** to sit with the men? **That took guts!**" code switching. (pg, 14). The line shows a direct language shift into English language such as the process of code switching. One notable aspect of language maintenance is Zareen's efforts to preserve her Pakistani identity through language. Despite her fluency in English, she values Urdu as a connection to her heritage. However, her parents' generation, represented by her father, struggles with English, leading to intergenerational language differences. This is evident when Zareen's father, Baba, speaks broken English, emphasizing his attachment to Urdu and Punjabi.

On the other hand, Lambert's perspective adds to this by considering the psychological aspects of bilingualism and language shift. He highlights how individuals' attitudes toward their native language and the dominant language influence their linguistic choices. Positive attitudes towards bilingualism, coupled with a strong sense of cultural identity, can foster language maintenance. Conversely, if individuals perceive their native language as a hindrance to socio-economic advancement, they may be more inclined towards language shift as Feroza immerses herself in American culture, she gradually undergoes a language shift, adopting American English expressions, idioms, and pronunciation. Her interactions with American peers, academic environment, and everyday experiences contribute to this transformation, leading to a noticeable change in her linguistic identity. The use of most frequent words using Antconc by Feroza in English language at the place of Urdu is can best be understood by the following table;

Type	Frequency
Thank you	6
Please	28
Sorry	23
Yes	24
No	179
Okay	19
Food (at the place of separate dishes name in native languages)	26
Time	175
Home	66
coffee	14
Tea	12
Breakfast	9
Dinner	27
Phone	18
School	26
College	32
University	25

Friend	37
Family	128
Love	36
Money	43
Book	14
Music	10
Dance	13
Party	13
Holiday	4
Travel	13
Car	77
Train	4
Plane	7
Home	66
Bus	18
Bed	44
Clothes	31
Bag	24

Table. 4.1

Throughout the novel, Feroza's language shift is evident in various aspects of her life. In her social interactions, she starts using American slang and colloquialisms, mirroring the speech patterns of her American friends and classmates. Her vocabulary expands to include American terms for food, clothing, and everyday objects, reflecting her integration into American society. Additionally, Feroza's accent undergoes a subtle change, becoming more Americanized as she spends more time in the U.S., further illustrating her linguistic adaptation.

Findings and Conclusions

In "American Brat," Sidhwa portrays a multilingual environment where characters navigate between English, Urdu, and Punjabi. Zareen, the protagonist, is fluent in English due to her upbringing in the United States, but she also understands Urdu, her parents' language. However, her proficiency in Urdu is limited, leading to instances of code-switching and language mixing. Despite her language shift, Feroza also experiences moments of language maintenance, where she actively preserves her Pakistani linguistic and cultural heritage. In private conversations with her family, Feroza continues to use Urdu and Parsi Gujarati, maintaining a strong connection to her roots. She participates in cultural and religious traditions, using traditional prayers, blessings, and expressions in their original languages.

These moments of language maintenance serve as anchors to Feroza's identity, reminding her of her cultural heritage amidst the pressures of assimilation. However, while language maintenance is present in Feroza's life, it serves as a secondary element compared to her language shift. The dominant theme in the novel is Feroza's adaptation to American English and culture, reflecting broader themes of immigration, identity, and belonging. Feroza's linguistic journey highlights the complexities of cultural assimilation and the challenges of navigating multiple linguistic and cultural identities in a globalized world.

In conclusion, Feroza Ginwalla's experiences of language shift and maintenance in "An American Brat" underscore the complexities of cultural identity and adaptation in a multicultural society. While she undergoes a significant language shift towards American English, she also holds onto her Pakistani linguistic heritage through moments of language maintenance. Ultimately, the dominant element among language shift and maintenance in Feroza's narrative is the gradual assimilation into American culture, reflecting the broader themes of identity formation and belonging in the novel.

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