

Students' Attitude towards Teachers' Urdu Code-Switching in ESL Class-Rooms at University of Management & Technology Lahore

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Abstract

In multilingual classrooms such as in Pakistan most of the individuals have the knowledge of two or more languages, the linguistic phenomenon of combining languages is quite frequent. "A common term for alternative use of two or more languages, varieties of a language or even speech styles" is called code-switching (Hymes, 1974). The present article investigates the students' attitudes to Urdu code-switching (CS) used by teachers in English as a Second Language classes at University of Management & Technology Lahore. A sample of 30 students studying at undergraduate level has been taken. Quantitative approach of data analysis has been used to investigate the responses. A 10-item questionnaire was developed and distributed among the students. The closed questions of the questionnaires were analyzed statistically by using the SPSS program. The results display that students have positive attitude towards teachers' code-switching in ESL class-rooms and teachers' code-switching is an effective teaching strategy when teaching English in Pakistani scenario.

Keywords: Code-switching, Attitude, Investigation, ESL class

1. Introduction

Studies of language acquisition, second language acquisition, and language learning use the term code switching to describe either bilingual speakers' or language learners' cognitive linguistic abilities, or to describe classroom or learner practices involving the use of more than one language (e.g. Romaine 1989; Cenoz and Genesee 2001; Fotos 2001, inter alia). English is used as a second language in Pakistan and nobody can deny its importance. One of the greatest challenges that many educational institutions in Pakistan face is attempting to educate and communicate properly with a large and growing population of children and adults who cannot communicate in English. In classroom practice, teachers have been instructed to teach English in English as Second Language classrooms.

The low level of English proficiency among students in Pakistani scenario has brought about the need to find out how to tackle the issue. As a result teachers have been using code switching as a means of providing students with the opportunities to communicate and enhancing students' understanding. Code switching helps to facilitate the flow of classroom instruction since the teachers do not have to spend so much time trying to explain to the learners or searching for the simplest words to clarify any confusion that might arise. According to Norrish (1997), teachers code-switch when the level of English used in the textbook or to be taught is beyond the learner's ability or when the teachers have exhausted the means to adjust their speech to the learner's level.

In Pakistan, learners have access to a common language. Pakistani learners know the National Language, Urdu, from their exposure inside and outside class, so allowing the use of Urdu in code-switching. Since Urdu is understood by the learners of different backgrounds, teachers through code-switching would be able to ensure the transfer of intended skills to the learners is done effectively. Martin-Jones (1995, p. 98) explains the role of CS in bilingual classroom in these words: "Whilst the languages used in a bilingual classroom are bound to be associated with different cultural values, it is too simplistic to claim that whenever a bilingual who has the same language background as the learners switches into shared codes, she/he is invariably expressing solidarity with the learners. Code-switching is employed in more subtle and diverse ways in bilingual classroom communication. Teachers and learners exploit code contrasts to demarcate different types of discourse, to negotiate and renegotiate joint frames of reference and to exchange meaning on the spur of the moment."

According to Martin-Jones (1995) & Guthrie's (1984), comparative study's result proved that the monolingual teacher was less able to teach those students who were at an early stage of development and at this point he placed the bilingual teacher at advantage.

Code-switching should not be considered as a sign of defect in the teacher. Instead, it is a careful

strategy employed by the teachers. Code-switching should be allowed whenever necessary with some learners in specific situations (Schweers, 1999; Chick & McKay, 1999; Burden, 2001; Dash, 2002; Tang, 2002). Ellis (1994), Cook (2001), Richards & Rodgers (2001) and Widdowson (2003) who have been researching second language teaching and learning claim that, although exposure to the target language can ensure success, the exposure may not work in every classroom. It has been argued that English Only classroom would only lead to frustration since the input is incomprehensible to the learners (Lai, 1996; Brice & Roseberry-McKibbin, 2001; Widdowson, 2003).

In supporting the existence of code switching in language classrooms, Skiba (1997) suggests that it serves for continuity in speech instead of presenting interference in language. In this respect, code switching stands to be a supporting element in communication of information and in social interaction; therefore serves for communicative purposes in the way that it is used as a tool for transference of meaning. The use of code switching builds a bridge from known to unknown and may be considered as an important element in language teaching when used efficiently.

2. Research Question

What is students' attitude towards teachers' Urdu code switching in ESL class-rooms at University of Management & Technology Lahore?

3. Methodology

The study involved a survey of 30 students from the population of two hundred students taking English I (English Grammar & Comprehension) course. All of them are doing their undergraduate program at University of Management & Technology, Lahore.

The present research employed quantitative approach of data analysis. A questionnaire was used to investigate the students' attitude towards teachers' Urdu code-switching. It was adapted from Schweers' (1999), Tang's (2002) and Burden's (2001) studies. The questionnaire consists of ten items. There are five choices to each question item using a Likert scale and choices are given marks from 5 to 1. The closed questions of the questionnaires were analyzed statistically by using the SPSS 16.0 program. Descriptive statistics of data were computed, and the mean was used as a central tendency measure to find out the percentage.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The data collected with the help of questionnaire was put to SPSS 16 for statistical analysis. Each variable was calculated in percentage. On the whole, students' attitudes towards teachers' Urdu code-switching were positive. When asked from students if their teachers' code-switching helps them to enjoy their lesson, 99 percent of the respondents were either strongly agreed or agreed that their teachers' code-switching has made them enjoy their English classes. (Appendix 1: Table 1.2)

In the second question on the questionnaire, 96 percent of the respondents were also either strongly agreed or agreed that they feel satisfied with their learning due to the code-switch (Appendix 1: Table 1.3). Responses to question 3 indicate that 89 percent of the respondents were either strongly agreed or agreed that they feel more comfortable with the lessons when teachers code-switch whereas only 11 percent of the respondents were disagreed (Appendix 1: Table 1.4). In question 4 the finding shows that 76 percent of the respondents were either strongly agreed or agreed that code-switching has made them feel less tensed, while only 17 percent of the respondents were not sure and 7 percent of them were disagreed. (Appendix 1: Table 1.5)

The results of the above questions show that code-switching help learners to enjoy their learning due to their ability to comprehend the teachers' input. The comprehensible input also allows them to feel less stressful and to become more comfortable to learn. Once they are comfortable with the environment, without any unnecessary anxiety (Lai, 1996; Schweers, 1999; Chi, 2000; Burden, 2001), the learners are able to focus and participate in classroom practice and activities more successfully.

In responding to question 5, 67 percent of the respondents were either strongly agreed or agreed that their teachers' code-switching has assisted them in feeling less lost during the lesson. Whereas, 17 percent were not sure and 17 percent were either disagreed or strongly disagreed. (Appendix 1: Table 1.6)

The results of question 6 indicate that 80 percent of the respondents were either strongly agreed or agreed that their teachers can better encourage students when they switch code. Whereas 13 percent of the respondents were not sure and only 7 percent were disagreed (Appendix 1: Table 1.7). Responses to question 7 indicate that 87 percent of the respondents were either strongly agreed or agreed that through code-switching teachers can better praise their students. While 10 percent of the respondents were not sure and 3 percent were disagreed. (Appendix 1: Table 1.8)

Thus, according to the results mentioned above, the presence of psychological support makes learners feel more relaxed when learning the language. When they feel that they can follow the lesson, and not feeling lost, they would look forward to learning more English.

In question 8 findings indicate that 80 percent of the respondents were either strongly agreed or agreed that teachers can better enliven the class while using the strategy of code-switching, whereas 20 percent of the respondents were strongly disagreed or disagreed (Appendix 1: Table 1.9). The findings of question 9 show that approximately 70 percent of the respondents were either strongly agreed or agreed that they prefer the teacher to use code-switching if the lesson is boring whereas nearly 14 percent of the respondents were not sure and 10 percent were strongly disagreed or disagreed (Appendix 1: Table 1.10). In question 10, the result shows that approximately 54 percent of the respondents were either strongly agreed or agreed that they prefer to ask their teacher in Urdu while nearly 17 percent of the respondents were not sure and 30 percent of the respondents were strongly disagreed or disagreed. (Appendix 1: Table 1.11)

The analysis of the findings shows that anxiety-free classroom atmosphere encourages students to participate more actively in the classroom activities. Therefore, learning success requires successful provision of comprehensible input along with affective support to ensure learners understand the intended content.

Hence, teachers' code-switching is important in providing a psychologically conducive learning environment for the learners (Lai, 1996; Schweers, 1999), providing a strong foundation to learners' affective satisfaction.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the learners have a positive attitude towards teachers' code-switching in the ESL classrooms and teachers' code-switching is significantly associated with learners' affective support. There is an important relationship between teachers' code-switching and positive affective learning state. Students' positive attitude towards teachers' code-switching reflects the learners' willingness to use English effectively as a result of learners' understanding of teachers' input. An English Only classroom cannot always ensure comprehensible input. Hence, code-switching by the teacher should be considered a form of teaching strategy. This form of classroom instructions fulfils the communicative aspects of the syllabus and teaching approach, by way of achieving the transfer of meaning as desired by the teaching (Skiba, 1997; Cook, 2001; Sert, 2005).

Insufficient attention is paid to the ESL classroom discourse in Pakistan and it is the need of time to develop more understanding in the context of Pakistani ESL classroom discourse. Many researchers (Lai, 1996; Cole, 1998; Critchley, 1999; Schweers, 1999; Burden, 2001; Tang, 2002; Greggio & Gil, 2007), have argued that code switching can be a useful tool in assisting English language teaching and learning process. Others see an opportunity for language development because code switching allows the effective transfer of information from the senders to the receivers in relaxed and comfortable environment. (Skiba, 1997)

Finally, more researches in this area can open new avenues because a better understanding of code-switching will have positive impacts on the planning for English language teaching and learning.

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Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1.1

Statistics											
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
N	Valid	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.57	4.47	4.33	4.13	3.73	4.10	4.27	4.37	4.10	3.33
Std. Deviation		.504	.571	.758	1.042	1.112	1.094	.785	1.033	1.185	1.295

Table 1.2

Q1					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	13	43.3	43.3	43.3
	Strongly Agree	17	56.7	56.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.3

Q2					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Sure	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Agree	14	46.7	46.7	50.0
	Strongly Agree	15	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.4

Q3					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Not Sure	2	6.7	6.7	10.0
	Agree	13	43.3	43.3	53.3
	Strongly Agree	14	46.7	46.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.5

Q4

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Disagree	1	3.3	3.3	6.7
	Not Sure	5	16.7	16.7	23.3
	Agree	9	30.0	30.0	53.3
	Strongly Agree	14	46.7	46.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.6

Q5

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Disagree	4	13.3	13.3	16.7
	Not Sure	5	16.7	16.7	33.3
	Agree	12	40.0	40.0	73.3
	Strongly Agree	8	26.7	26.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.7

Q6

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Not Sure	4	13.3	13.3	20.0
	Agree	11	36.7	36.7	56.7
	Strongly Agree	13	43.3	43.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.8

Q7

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Not Sure	3	10.0	10.0	13.3
	Agree	13	43.3	43.3	56.7
	Strongly Agree	13	43.3	43.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.9

Q8

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Not Sure	3	10.0	10.0	20.0
	Agree	4	13.3	13.3	33.3
	Strongly Agree	20	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.10

Q9

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Disagree	1	3.3	3.3	10.0
	Not Sure	4	13.3	13.3	23.3
	Agree	8	26.7	26.7	50.0
	Strongly Agree	15	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.11

Q10

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Disagree	6	20.0	20.0	30.0
	Not Sure	5	16.7	16.7	46.7
	Agree	10	33.3	33.3	80.0
	Strongly Agree	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 2: Figures

Figure 2.1

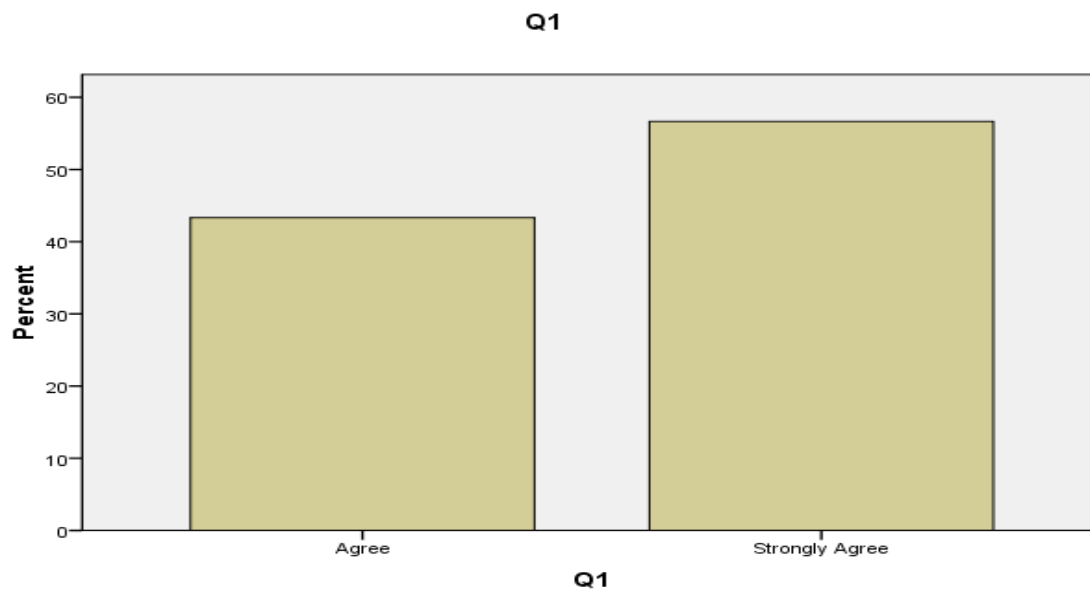


Figure 2.2

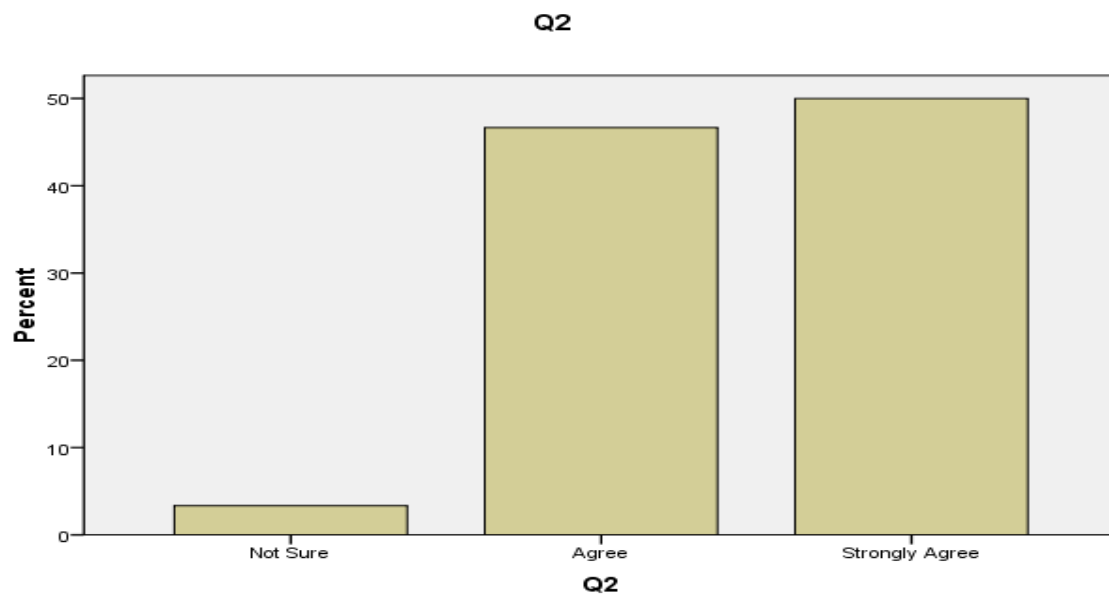


Figure 2.3

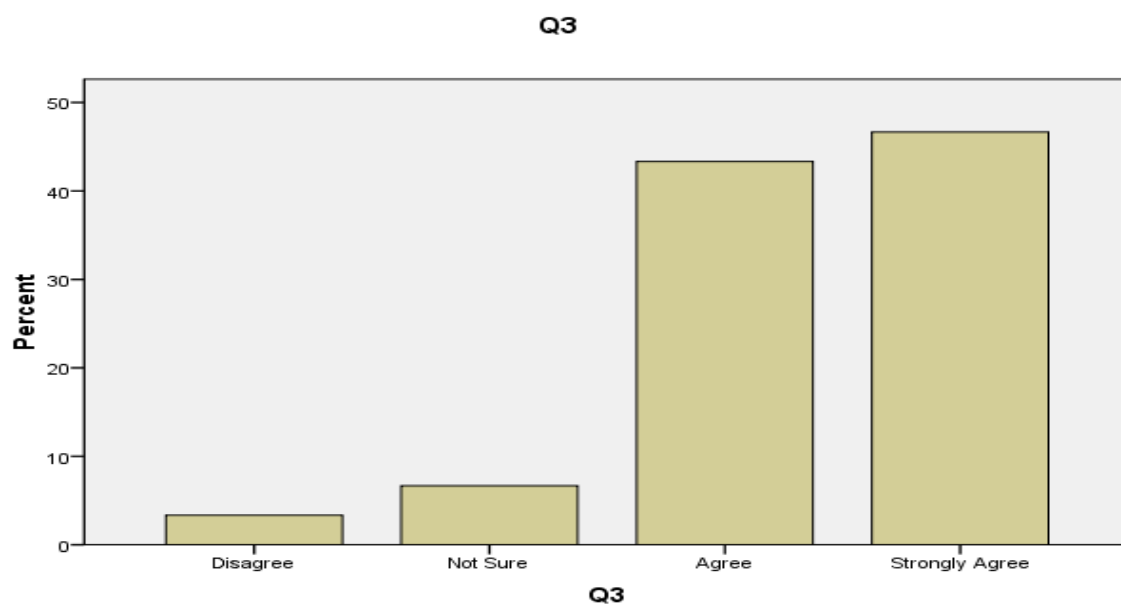


Figure 2.4

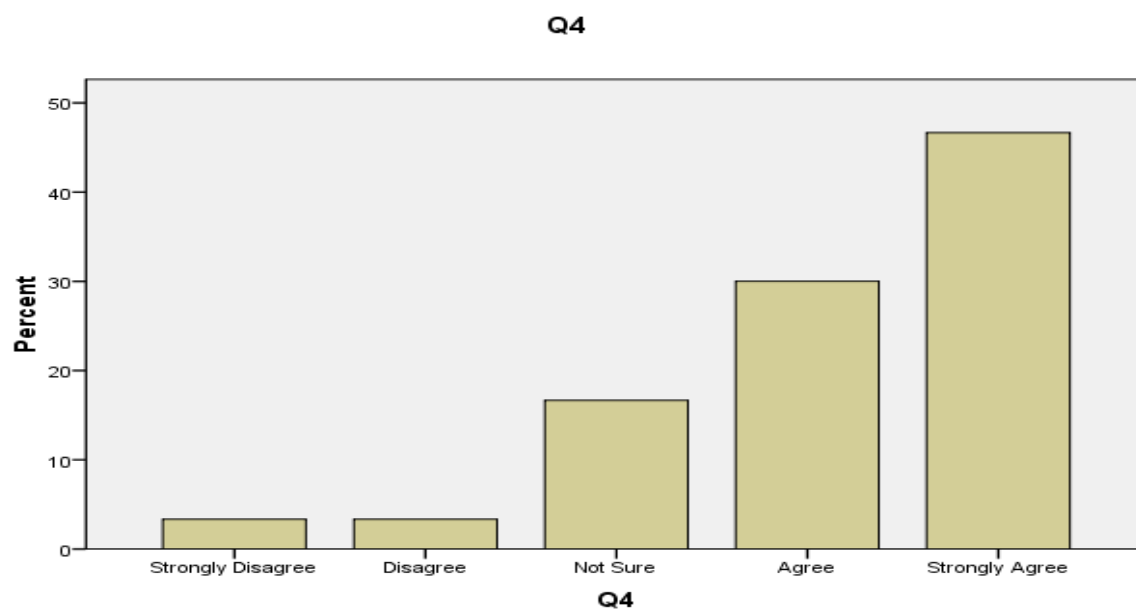


Figure 2.5

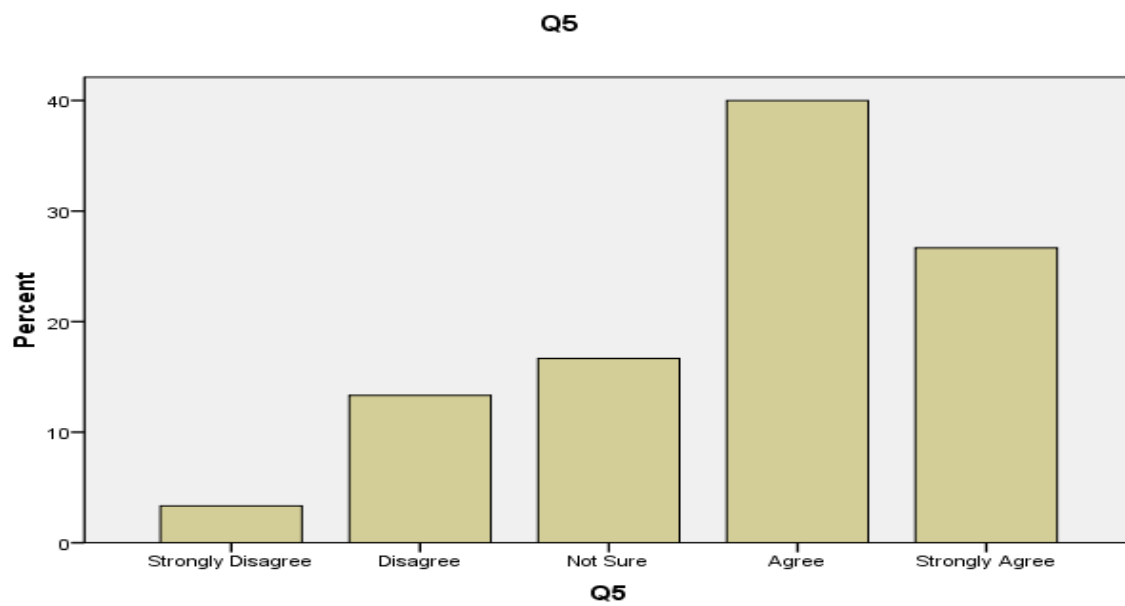


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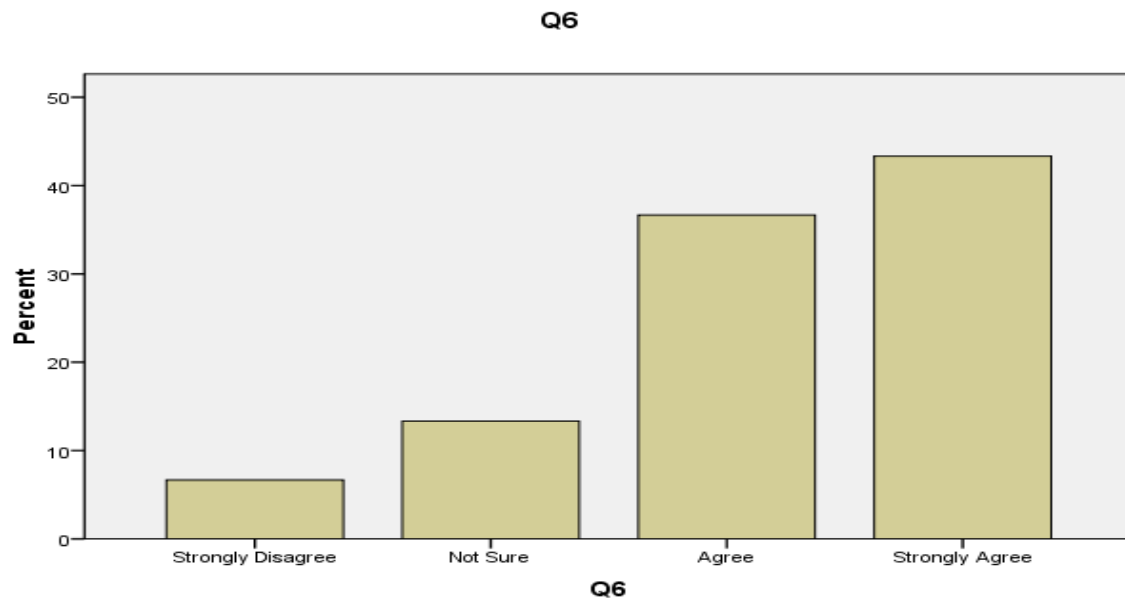


Figure 2.7

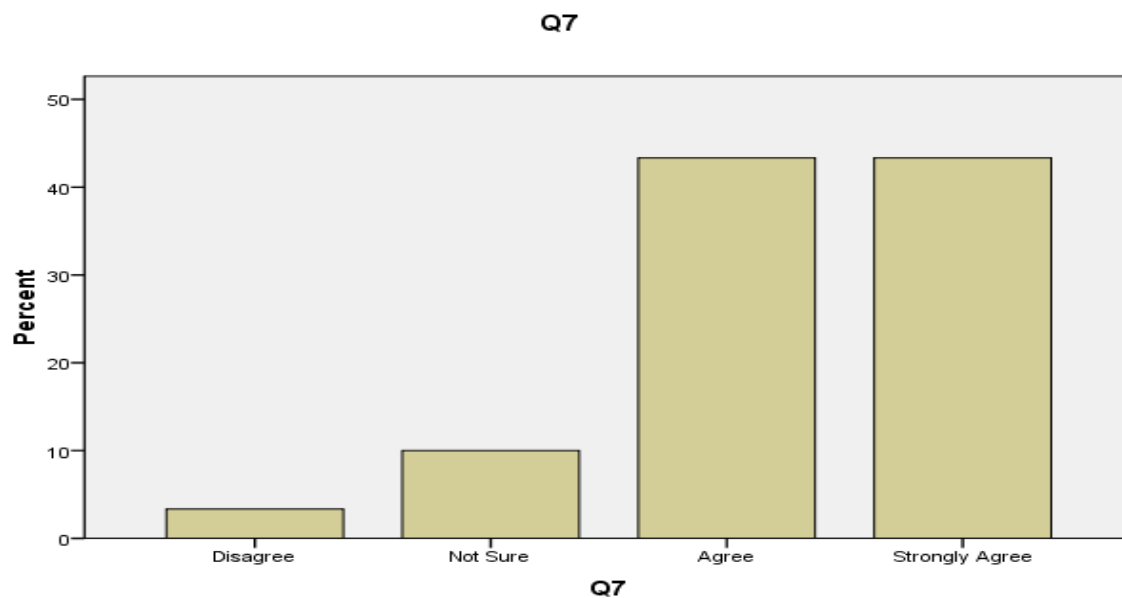


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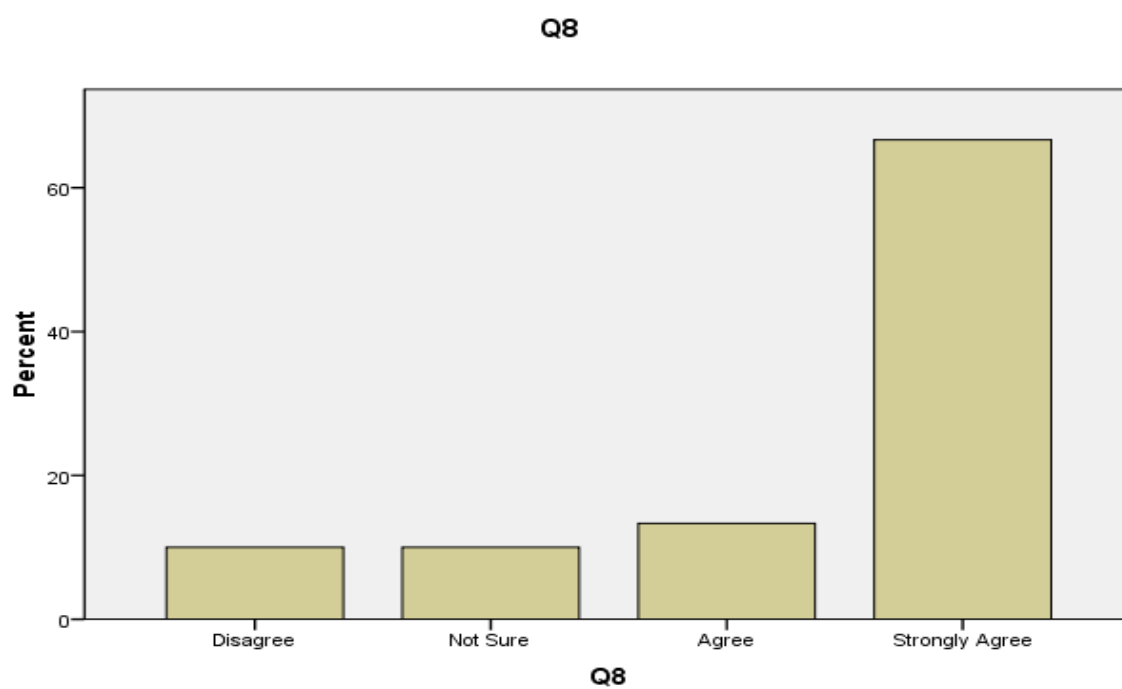


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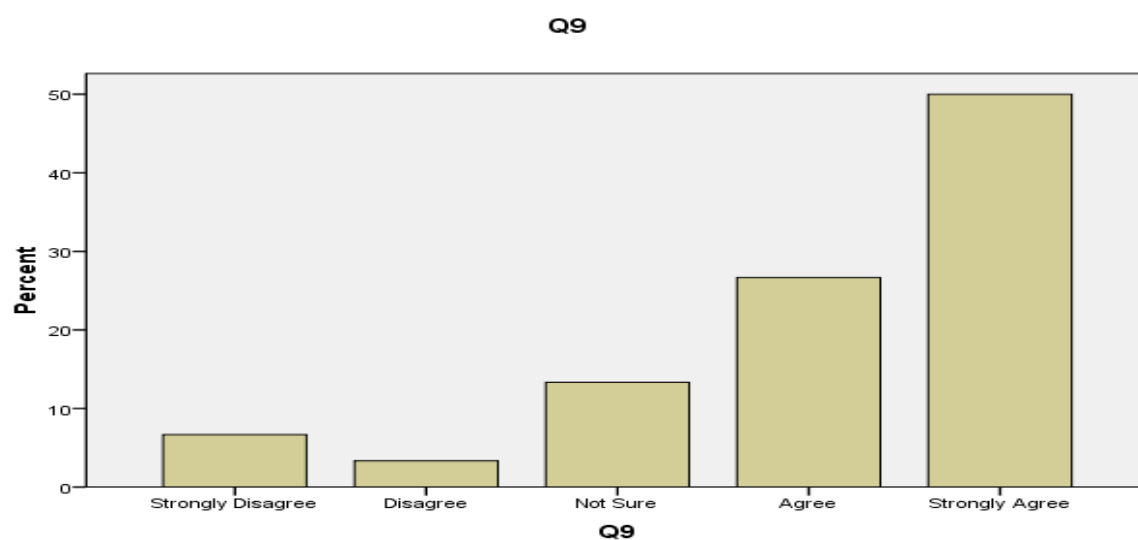
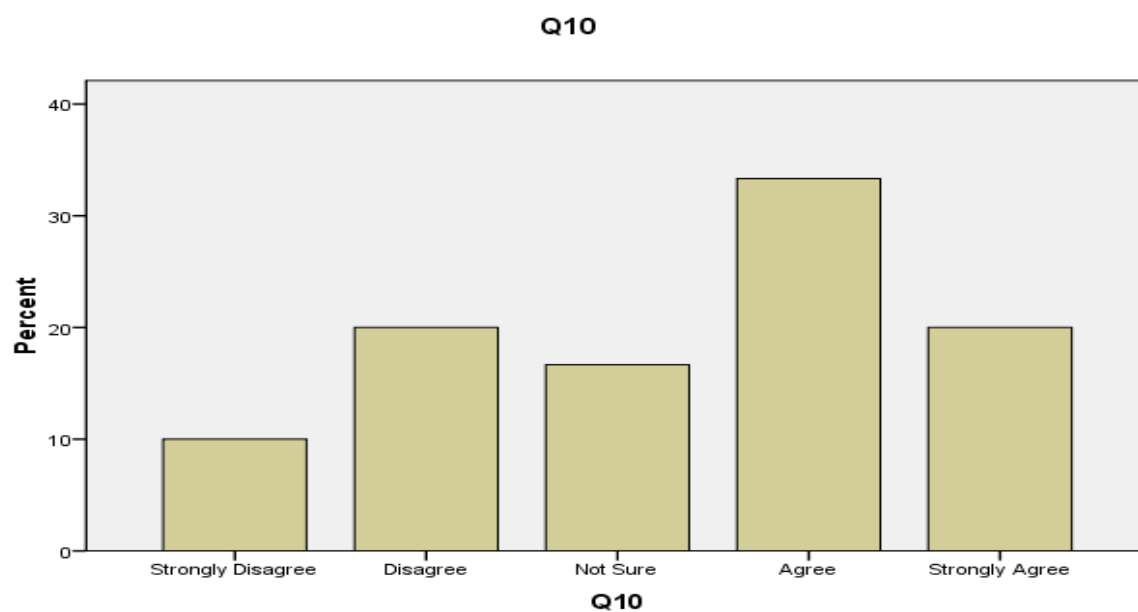


Figure 2.10



Appendix 3: Questionnaire

Survey of Students to investigate their Attitude towards Teachers' Urdu Code-Switching in English as Second Language class-rooms at University of Management & Technology Lahore

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to investigate students' attitudes towards using Urdu in English classes (code-switching) by your teachers. I would be grateful if you answer the following questions as your answers will help teachers to understand your needs and overcome any difficulty you may have with English.

Your cooperation in this regard shall be highly appreciated.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Demographic information

Name _____ Profession _____

Gender: 1. Male ☐ 2. Female ☐

Age: _____

Qualification: _____

Directions

Questions have been given and you ought to tick (✓) the most appropriate choice according to the five likert scale from 5 to 1. For example, in the following questions, If you Strongly agree the opinion in the statement, tick '5' in the check, If you Strongly disagree the opinion in the statement, tick '1' in the check,

5=strongly agree; 4=agree; 3=not sure; 2=disagree; 1=strongly disagree

Please tick (✓) the most appropriate choice

		Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	When my teacher does code-switching from English to Urdu it helps me enjoy my lesson	5	4	3	2	1
2	It helps me feel satisfied with my learning when my teacher switches from English to Urdu	5	4	3	2	1
3	It makes me feel comfortable to learn when teacher does code-switching	5	4	3	2	1
4	Code-switching from teacher during lesson helps me feel less tensed	5	4	3	2	1
5	I feel less lost during the lesson when teacher does code-switching from English to Urdu	5	4	3	2	1
6	I think the teachers who switch codes from English to Urdu can better encourage students.	5	4	3	2	1
7	I think the teachers who switch codes from English to Urdu can better praise students.	5	4	3	2	1
8	I think the teachers who switch codes from Urdu to English or from English to Urdu can better enliven the atmosphere of class (e.g. make a joke for humor).	5	4	3	2	1
9	I prefer the teacher to use Urdu if the lesson is boring	5	4	3	2	1
10	I prefer to ask my teacher questions in Urdu	5	4	3	2	1

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