
UNIT 1 MULTILINGUAL USE OF CODES

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to enable you to:

- Understand your experience of living with many languages;
- Distinguish between the use of many languages at different levels;
- Know under what conditions and for what purposes the languages are mixed;
- Realise why people switch between languages and how it is natural language use;
- Appreciate many languages and resources for creative communication.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units, you have learnt about many languages and about variations within a language that correlate with the region of birth, the social group and status of the user of the language, and with the content and communicative intent of the use of language. This diversity and variation is similar to the lexicon of a language having more than one word—called synonyms – to express one meaning. These synonyms are not redundant and superfluous, they are purposeful and enriching. They are like a rich person having more than one dress to wear on different occasions: like relaxing at home, working in office, playing in the field, performing a ritual, etc. They give you a choice. To have choices is to have empowerment.

You have also learnt in the precious units that languages, besides their personal names for identification, like English, Hindi, Tamil, Santali, Angami etc, have **category names for functional and status description** like mother tongue, tribal language, regional language, minority language, link language, scheduled language, official language, etc. These descriptive labels of languages are an expression of their position in a multilingual setting. Multilingualism is not just a matter of number of languages but is more importantly a matter of functional and political relation between languages. These labels are therefore important to understand the structure of multilingualism. Almost all countries in the world are multilingual but they differ in structuring their languages. They also differ with regard to flexibility in the structure and the opportunities made available to languages to change their place in the structure.

Unlike the names of languages, the labels are not naturally exclusive. A tribal language may be an official language as Mizo is the official language of Mizoram; a scheduled language like Sindhi is a minority language. The labels also change—depending on change in socio-political conditions. Konkani, which was a minority language, became a majority language when the new state of Goa was created and it also became its official language and a scheduled language listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Such dynamics makes the multilingual structure changeable.

The labels of language also indicate different functions of the languages. **Mother tongue** has the function of socially identifying a group of speakers. It consequently excludes other groups. **Minority language** signals certain safeguards for cultural preservations and educational opportunities provided in the Constitution. **Official language** is the instrument for transaction with and within the government. **Link language** is for communication between speakers of different languages, and so on.

The above kinds of structural and functional relation between languages in multilingualism have a bearing on the choice of language for a given purpose – as was mentioned earlier. The choice is not totally free. For example the role of Hindi as the official language of Himachal Pradesh, for example, precludes the use of a Pahadi language for official work by its speaker. Therefore if a certain role is assigned to a language, it prevents another language from being assigned the same role.

The freedom of choice of language at the individual level, on the other hand, is determined by the knowledge of language of people one interacts with. When two individuals speak different languages, communication is possible only when a third language known to both is chosen or when one of the two languages that are known to both is chosen. When a Tamil speaker and a Hindi speaker meet, the chosen language for communication may be English or Hindi. The social attitude towards the languages also plays a role in the choice. Often the social relations between the interlocutors have a bearing: the language of the person with higher social status in an asymmetrical social relation is the normal choice. Nevertheless, it is also common to use both languages—switching between them or mixing them. This unit is about this choice of more than one language, normally two, by bilingual speakers in given social situations. Before going into the factors that motivate this choice and the factors that impose constraints on the choice made, we shall see some general features of the nature of multilingualism as found in the state, in the community, and in the individuals.

1.2 LEVELS OF MULTILINGUALISM

1.2.1 Level of the State.

India is a multilingual country. There are speakers of about 200 languages that historically belong to four different language families-viz.; Indo European (54)

Dravidian (20) Austro-Asiatic (20) and Sino-Tibetan (84). The rest (22) are unclassified and foreign languages. These languages are abstractions of over 1600 mother tongues reported by the people in the 1961 census. They vary in size from less than 25 who are speakers of Andamanese to more than 25 crores, who are speakers of Hindi, according to 1981 census. This language diversity is not merely demographic; it is also functional. There are 22 official languages used as medium of administration, 43 educational languages used as medium of instruction at the primary level, nearly 100 languages used as medium of information dissemination through print and so on.

Though the country is divided into states on linguistic lines, each state is multilingual. Linguistic minorities vary from 4% in Kerala to almost 40% in Manipur. The states are functionally multilingual to different degrees.

Use of language at the level of the state is determined by the language policy formulated by the ruling class. The policy generally pertains to language use in public domains and it is prescriptive in areas like public administration, education, and law. It is supportive in areas like cultural production, entertainment and the market. The policy does not encompass language use in private domains like home, places of worship and community formations. The policy aims at having clear language boundaries and formal distinction between languages; minimising variation within a language through standardization; and distancing the official language from the grass root language in terms of grammatical structure and vocabulary.

The choice of a particular language or languages in public domains and of particular forms of those languages becomes dependent on the policy of the State.

1.2.2 Level of the Community

A community is a group of people who share by convention and consensus common interests, values, behavioural norms and a heritage, real or assumed. When the shared element is a language, it is a linguistic community. Besides sharing a language that is generally naturally transmitted across generations, a linguistic community also shares the norms of use of that language and the beliefs about that language. It is not necessary, however, that a community shares a language. There can be a multilingual community. The use of languages for different purposes is determined by the community by convention and consensus. The use pertains to private domains. It does not preclude the use of non-standard varieties. As a matter of fact, they may be preferred to express the identity of the community in contrast to the State's prescription of the use of the standard variety in the public domains for its normalizing value.

A linguistic community that is monolingual may have a diglossic language. A diglossic language is one where there are two varieties: high and low. The high variety is formally learnt by instruction; it is used in "formal" social contexts like public speech, class room instruction and for identification of knowledge and other creations that are preserved and transmitted in the written mode. The low variety is informally learnt at home and is used for informal communication.

Thus the two high and low varieties of the same language have different functions and are used in different social contexts. Their use is conventionalized socially. When using a language, the choice of the appropriate variety has to follow the social convention.

1.2.3 Level of the Individual

In a multilingual community, speakers have more than one language. From a communication point of view, it is meaningful to talk of their language repertoire rather than of his or her mother tongue. They may have learnt more than one

language simultaneously from the beginning. Mother tongue, as a label of social identification is just one of the languages in their repertoire.

When speakers have a repertoire of languages, they have a choice in the use of language. Language is used for giving and getting information, for sharing emotions, for getting action done, for acquiring knowledge, etc. But these acts of communication are not the only use of language. Language is also used for acknowledging and establishing social relation. A communication act of the language is intertwined with a social act.

There are fundamentally two social relations—the relation of solidarity or intimacy between people and the relation of power or distance between people. The first is the relation of inclusion and the second is the relation of exclusion. The choice of language, as the choice of particular words, grammatical forms and syntactic structures, derives from the social relation that is acknowledged or to be established. When it is the acknowledgement of an existing social relation, there are socially accepted rules of language use. Language choice follows these rules. When it is establishment of a new social relation, the speaker chooses the language use rule that serves the purpose. These rules themselves are socially conditioned.

The above description is a brief introduction to how languages acquire their functions at different levels. Language use is the choice of the appropriate language for a given function. It is not always the case that the choice between languages is mutually exclusive in a particular speech event. The choice may involve mixing of two languages or switching between two languages. This choice is also for carrying out intended functions as the choice of single languages is. The mixing and switching of languages does not indicate lack of linguistic competence on the part of the speaker. Nor is it indicative of laziness to maintain language boundaries. Boundary crossing is a communication strategy and it has a communicative function.

This unit is about crossing language boundaries in communication with a social intent. It is, in other words, about constructing and conveying social meanings making use of the resources of two languages.

1.3 MIXING CODES

1.3.1 Borrowing

Languages do not exist in isolation from each other. They interact with each other and the interaction has some consequences to the grammar and vocabulary of the languages concerned. They make use of each other's resources for their enrichment and effectiveness. The most common in this process is **borrowing** – the process of acquiring grammatical features and words from another language. The borrowed grammatical features and words become part of the borrowing language and get assimilated into its system. A manifestation of this is that even a monolingual speaker, who has no knowledge of the donor language, will use these grammatical features and words as if they are a part of his/her language. They are in other words transmitted from one generation to another long after the borrowing and donor languages are not in contact.

1.3.2 Mixing

When the languages continue to be in contact and when the speakers are bilingual, borrowing may continue. There may also be mixing of the languages. The mixing of languages is called code mixing. The educated speakers in India, who are bilingual in English along with another Indian language, mix English with the Indian languages.

Let us call the language that is used for mixing the Supra language (some call it Source language) and the language that gets mixed the Base language. Any language in the repertoire of the speaker can be supra (SL) or Base Language (BL).

1.3.3 The Base Language

There is then a methodological question as to which is SL and which is BL. The difficulty of this question can be seen in sentences like (1), which have words from English and Hindi more or less equally.

1. a. train aaj three hours late hai
The train is delayed by three hours today.
- b. association president ek corrupt aadmi hai
The Association President is a corrupt man.

The number of words therefore cannot help to identify the BL or SL of a mixed utterance. Not even the morphology helps. In 1 (a) the noun has the plural suffix of English and the verb is inflected like Hindi. The syntax helps. The verb occurs finally in a sentence in Hindi, the copula (be) verb occurs after the predicate. Because the verb is final in (1), these sentences may be said to have Hindi as their BL.

1.3.4 The Clause

This syntactic criterion however is clause based. If a sentence has more than one clause, the two clauses may have different syntactic structures. In 2 below the main clauses have the Hindi syntactic structure in that the verb is final and the complement and relative clauses have English syntactic structure in that the verb is in the middle.

2. a. yo log impression aisa dete hain that they are very busy.
These people give the impression that they are very busy.
- b. hamaari class men kahi girls hain who have got good marks.
There are many girls in my class who have got good marks.

(2) shows that when languages are mixed not every clause in a sentence has consistently the syntactic structure of one language.

The syntactic structure of the main clause in (2) is Hindi and this may be taken to decide that in that sentence BL is Hindi and SL is English. In (3), the syntactic structure of the main clause is English and therefore its BL must be taken as English.

3. a. Then she said kii aissa kiyaa tum logon ne
Then she said that you have done this.
- b. We can't generalize kii love marriage as such is bad
We can't generalize that love marriage as such is bad.

In the complement clause of 3 (a), the verb is not final. Hindi allows rearranging the word order. This makes it possible for the final verb to be moved to the front. This ordering does not change the status of the syntactic structure of the complement clause from that of Hindi. That is, at the clause level, the complement clause remains to be Hindi and SL, which is mixed on to English, which is used for the main clause.

1.3.5 The Verb

It makes it necessary to say that, in addition to the syntactic structure of the clause, the language of the predicate helps to decide on BL. The BL of a mixed sentence is the language of its main clause. To be more precise, it is the language of the inflection of the verb. When an English verb is mixed in a Hindi sentence, the inflection is not with English suffixes but with Hindi suffixes, that are added to the dummy verb kar 'do' (or its equivalent in other Indian languages) or to the auxiliary (vector) verb.

4. a. mein try kartaa hun
I am trying
b. usne kisko love kiyaa?
Whom did he love?
c. muja drop kijiye
Please drop me.

The above examples of code mixing show that it is not only words, but also phrases and clauses that are mixed. Among the words, it is not only content words that have referential meaning, but also functional words that have grammatical meaning that occur independently like **but**, **to** of English, **to** 'conditional' **aur** 'and' of Hindi are also mixed. The condition is that the mixed form must be a free form.

1.3.6 The Grammatical Category

A word from SL may be modified to fit the morphological form of BL. Not all English adverbs have the suffix-ly. But the adverb in Tamil, with a few exceptions, has the suffix-aa. When an English adverb without the adverbial suffix is mixed on to Tamil, it takes the suffix-aa, just like the adverbs with -ly.

5. a. avan quick-aa vandaan
he -adv. came
He came quickly
b. avan fast-aa vandaan
he -adv came
He came fast.

There is less pressure to maintain the morphological structure of BL in the mixed sentence.

Normally, the grammatical category status of the mixed word in SL will be maintained in BL. That is, a noun will be a noun, an adjective will be an adjective and so on. The phrasal verbs of English, however, may be mixed by reducing its phrasal structure and using the preposition as a verb in place of the whole phrasal verb.

6. a. light on-karoo
Turn on the light
b. ball out-kiyaa
(etc.) kicked out the ball

1.3.7 The Word Class

Though all word classes are mixed, they are not mixed with the same frequency. With all languages, nouns are most frequently mixed of the four word classes. The frequency of other three word classes seems to differ depending on the typological structure of BL and the genetic relation of BL to SL. The order given for mixing English on to Spanish is noun, adjective, adverb, verb and functional words. In the mixing of English on to Indian Languages, verb (with a dummy verb for inflection) is not the last in the order of frequency.

In each word class, each member is not equally mixed. Mixing of some members are marked. Some members are not permitted to be mixed. It is difficult to formulate rules to cover the words that are excluded from mixing. There are, however, some sub-categories of a class of words like pronouns (personal, anaphoric and interrogative) that are not mixed from English in Indian Languages.

1.3.8 The Constraints

Mixing is not totally free linguistic behaviour. There are some constraints on mixing that are evidenced by the fact that some mixed sentences are ungrammatical. They

are not produced; if they are produced they are performance errors of speech. Mixing in this sense is a rule governed linguistic behaviour. It also exhibits rules of linguistic competence. Mixing cannot generate a sentence that violates any principle of the Universal Grammar. It cannot generate at the clause level a clause that violates any grammatical rule of the language it represents.

In addition to these general constraints there are some language specific constraints. Linguists have tried to generalize on the basis of such specific constraints the rules for general constraints on mixing. But they have not succeeded. The issue remains open.

1.3.9 Indeterminacy

Though a mixed language has general grammatical properties like any unmixed natural language, a characteristic feature of it is indeterminacy. What is mixed and how much is mixed in expressing a propositional meaning? Speakers vary among themselves and a speakers may vary from one time to another. In unmixed languages also, availability of synonyms at lexical and structural levels introduces some indeterminacy in expressing a propositional meaning. Predictability of a particular expression given a constant meaning is not strong in isolation. But the choice of expression is conditioned to a large extent by **textual cohesion** with regard to **point of view, topic continuity or change, old-new information, style**, etc. For a given propositional meaning, for example, the choice of active or passive sentence may be predicted from one or more features of coherence of a text.

1.3.10 Absence of Social Function

In language mixing indeterminacy of predictability of choice of an expression by the speaker at the lexical, phrasal and causal levels is quantitatively large. Predictability enhances when the social meanings intended by the speakers are known. These are, however, difficult to know, as they are interpretive rather than descriptive. These social-non-proportional-meanings are sometimes called the functions of code mixing or motivations for code mixing.

The mixed code could be a code in addition to the unmixed codes that is made use of by the stable bilinguals of these unmixed codes. The mixed code itself may be chosen to express the identity of being an educated bilingual or to maintain the double identity of belonging to the Indian language speech community and to the English speaking speech community. Apart from the expression of this social identity or identities, the choice of the mixed code does not convey social meanings.

When mixing is chosen as a communication tool rather than a strategy for conveying social meanings, forms that are familiar as formulaic or set expressions are used from the BL or SL. The building blocks of a language are not words alone but also fixed combination of words. Words and combination of words from more than one language, make a mixed language. They may also come in handy when the speaker is at a loss for expression in one language or when one language lacks expressions of brevity and directness for intended propositional meanings. When a language-lacks common words or when the words are too formal or pedantic for an ordinary conversation, words from another language may be mixed. Using English words when discussing science in our Indian language is an example of this.

1.3.11 Social Meanings

The discussion above points out that not all mixed expressions convey social meanings. Conveying social meanings is one aspect of mixed codes. The social meanings have basically two functions mentioned earlier viz. expressing intimacy and expressing distance. The mixing of Hindi in a mainly English text in advertisements of products targeting the youth, in gossip columns in film magazines,

terms of endearment in teenage conversations are marked examples of intimacy. The mixing of English in an Indian Language to avoid socially or regionally marked forms that will reveal the social or regional identity of the speaker in mixed gatherings is to distance the speaker from his or her background. Mixing with English here plays the role of the standard dialect, as English is socially and regionally neutral. When conveying an unpleasant message like death, the intimate impact of the message is softened by the choice of English words. Again if we mix English there is social and psychological distancing from the content when talking of taboo topics like sex or other sensitive topics. The use of English words in this mixing becomes like a euphemism; the use of the word 'community' for 'jati' is an example of this. Such distancing makes the conversation relatively more formal and less intimate.

The above brief description of the uses that code mixing is put to by speakers points out that the mixed code has its communicative functions like any ordinary language. The mixed language is a grammatical and functional systems of communication. It is an additional resource built out of the resources of independent languages. It is a process used by the bilingual speaker anew in every speech event.

1.4 SWITCHING CODES

1.4.1 Switching and Mixing

Switching between languages is different from mixing languages. As someone speaking in the home dialect with the members of the family switches to the standard dialect when friends walk in or someone speaking in the high variety of a diglossic language from a public platform switches to the low variety to make a joke, one can switch to a different language in a conversation. Switching is motivated by a change in the speech event: like in its participants or its topic. The language switched to is regarded as appropriate to the change in the speech event. This is a clear case of code switching.

Code switching may take place even when the speech event is constant and which continues to have the same participants and the same topic. There is nevertheless some subtle change in the social relation between the participants. Social relation may be negotiated and modified in the duration of the speech event. Playing according to rules of the given social relation such as the relation between the teacher and the student or husband and wife is only one dimension of conversational strategy. To negotiate change in the given relation and to play simultaneously with more than one relation in a conversation are other dimensions. The latter is possible because every person has more than one social identity – like the teacher and the friend of the father, for example and this multiple identity is manipulated in a conversation. Code-switching is a strategy to constitute a relational change or multiple relations in the course of a conversation.

In spite of the difference in the communicative purpose between code-mixing and code-switching it is difficult to distinguish them in linguistic terms. The stretches of the languages involved are generally longer in switching than in mixing. The other language stretches typically but not necessarily over a single sentence. **Nevertheless, it is appropriate to talk about mixing as concerning a unit of grammar and switching as concerning a unit of discourse.**

1.4.2 An Illustration

The following instance of code-switching between Tamil and English (taken from Canagorajah) illustrates the discourse functions of switching.

- Context: Department of English in the university. The chair has just explained that the visitor is not qualified to register for a master's degree in English, and that he has to do a special qualifying test before he can register.
- (16) Visitor: I am over fifty now. It is difficult to study for an exam at this stage. (pause). But if you as head recommend that I be allowed to register, based on my teaching experience, the university will allow me, no?
- (17) Chair: Actually the administrative part for higher students comes under a different department. I don't have much influence there.
- (18) Visitor: (pause). Non unmayor unkatai father-inrai friend. onRaai teach PaNNina naaisakal ippa cettu ponnaar, enn?
(‘I am actually a friend of your father. We did teach together. He is now deceased, isn't he?’)
- (19) Chair: Is that so? I didn't know that. (pause)
- (20) Visitor: appea irundoal haTTaayam help-paNNi iruppea. unka Te mother-ayum nallaa teriyam ava enka ippa?
(‘If your father had been here, he would have surely helped me. I know your mother well too. Where is she now?’)
- (21) Chair: She is in Colombo (pause)
- (22) Visitor: appa nothing can be done enna? (pause) I will see you later.
'So nothing can be done, is that so?.....'
- (23) Chair: Vom. Vaainkoo. nallam canticcatu
'Yes. Come again. Nice meeting you'.

1.4.3 Analysis

The above conversation is opened in English by the visitor as that is appropriate for the formal setting and purpose. There is a strategic change from formal relation to personal, from the relation of power to solidarity. Thus change in relation is effected by switching to Tamil, the native language shared by the visitor and the chair. This change is signalled by the pause preceding the switch. The chair, however, does not want to concede the relational change; does not switch to Tamil and continues in English. His conflict about the choice of relation is indicated by the pauses after his sentences (19 and 21). At the end of the conversation after the purpose by continuing in English and maintaining the formal relation is accomplished, the chair switches to Tamil to say goodbye (23). He thus acknowledges the intimate relation that the visitor tried to establish to get his thing done. Such negotiation of relationship and of getting things done is one of the functions of code-switching.

It may be noted that the visitor's switch to Tamil is a mixed code. The visitor, while negotiating a relationship of intimacy, maintains his identity of an educated person through the mixed code. It shows that switching can be to a mixed code, whose function is different from that of switching. This points out to the need for differentiating between code mixing and code switching.

1.5 LET US SUM UP

Languages are a resource to enrich one's functionality. The communicative and social functions of the language are distributed over many languages in the multilingual arrangement of a country. Such an arrangement is true of a community

and of an individual also. The distribution of functions of languages has political dimensions when it is decided by the policy of the state with regard to public domains. It is designed to maintain the power structure. At this macro level, the individual has a predetermined choice of language for use in public domains and has less freedom. The distribution of functions of languages at the community level is determined by the conventions controlled by the elite of the community.

At the individual level, in interpersonal interactions the speakers have the freedom to negotiate their social goals by their choice of language. Here they may choose to break language boundaries and the result is code-mixing. Code-mixing and code-switching represent language choice at the micro level, at the interpersonal level.

Code-mixing presupposes competence in two languages, not lack of it. It is not chaotic, but follows grammatical rules, not of one language but two languages. There are restrictions on what can be mixed. Code-mixing is not arbitrary, but functional. It conveys the social meanings of identity and distancing with regard to speech participants and speech content.

Code-switching is also a linguistic behaviour of competent bilinguals as code-mixing is. It however is contingent on change in speech participants or speech content in the course of a conversation. These changes necessitate the choice of another language appropriate for the new set of speech participants or the new speech content. Code-switching takes place even when there is no conspicuous change. The speaker may negotiate the social relationship with the other participant in terms of solidarity and power by the switching of his or her language in the course of the conversation.

Code-mixing and code switching are strategic interspersed use of two or more languages to achieve communicative and social goals. They increase the functionality of languages.

1.6 KEY WORDS

bilingual:	A bilingual is one who knows and uses more than one language.
language policy:	Language policy is a statement of goals to be achieved through language by giving status and role to languages.
standardization:	Standardization is a linguistic process that develops a form of language by reducing the variation in it for use in public domains.
public domain:	Public domain is an area of language use that is controlled institutionally and not by the common people.
linguistic community:	Linguistic community is a group of people who share a language and the norms of its use as well as values assigned to it.
multilingual community:	Multilingual community is a linguistic community sharing more than one language and their functional allocation.

Diglossic language is a language that has two standard varieties each with a grammar and a lexicon having distinctive features; the two varieties have mutually exclusive domains of use and different modes of acquisition.

language repertoire:

Language repertoire is the set of languages a speaker possesses and uses.

mother tongue:

Mother tongue is one of the languages in the language repertoire of a speaker which is used to identify him or her socially—based on language.

solidarity:

Solidarity is a social relation of inclusiveness, of intimacy.

power:

Power is a social relation of exclusiveness, of distance.

speech event:

Speech event is an event for interpersonal communication between people bounded by time and purpose.

borrowing:

Borrowing is the use of words and grammatical features from another language, which are assimilated into the system.

mixing:

Mixing is the alternating use of words and grammatical structures of another language by a bilingual to convey social meanings.

base language:

Base language is the language on to which the elements of another language are mixed.

supra language:

Supra language is the language from which the elements are mixed on to another language.

source language:

Source language is another name for supra language.

constraints:

The constraints are systematic restrictions of mixing; violation of a constraint will give an ill-formed mixed sentence.

propositional meaning:

Propositional meaning is the meaning of an utterance which is the sum of the denotative meanings of its words and the grammatical meanings of their structural relationship.

social meaning:

Social meaning is the add on meaning to the propositional meaning that says something about the people involved in the speech, particularly the social relationship between them and to the content of speech.

switching:

Switching is the alternative use of another language for the length of a discourse unit when there is a change in speech participants or speech content or both.

Negotiation is a communicative act in which a language or elements of a language are used to achieve symbolic interpersonal goals like status, new social relation etc.

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1.8 EXERCISE

1. What is a mother tongue? What is your mother tongue? Why do you call it your mother tongue?
2. List the scheduled languages of India? Why are they called scheduled? Why is English not a scheduled language?
3. What are the languages in your repertoire? In what contexts and for what purposes do you use each of them?
4. Are you free to choose a language for your intended use in both private and public domains? What are the limitations?

5. Describe the linguistic community you live in as regards its norms of language use and values about languages.
6. Indian languages borrow from English. Give examples of English borrowings at the lexical, structural and semantic levels.
7. Transcribe a brief conversation of English educated bilinguals (that may include you) and list what have been mixed and at what points in the structure of the sentence.
8. Identify the social meanings of mixed elements in the above description.
9. Can you think of any mixed sentence of your language and English which is unacceptable (ungrammatical) as a mixed sentence?
10. Watch a dialogue in a movie or a television programme where there is code-switching and try to explain the motivation for the switch.