A Study on Code-Mixing as a Communication Strategy among Urban Bilingual Tamils

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This paper explores code-mixing as a communication strategy among urban bilingual Tamils in Jaffna. In bilingual and multilingual societies where more than one language is used by different speech communities, speakers tend to know two or more than two languages. People who live in a bilingual or multilingual communication environment usually have the tendency to use two or more codes while communicating with each other. People not only speak different languages/codes but also mix the languages/codes known to them consciously or unconsciously. Code mixing is used as a linguistic device in informal styles of speaking. Therefore, this study tries to validate the factors contributing to code-mixing among urban bilingual Tamils. The research design incorporates the qualitative approach. The participants were urban bilinguals from different parts in Jaffna. The data for this study was collected by means of a questionnaire and analysed. The results showed that the degree of code-mixing depends on various factors such as amount of exposure to English, the medium of instruction and the frequency of language used in different domains, contexts and topics of discussion which trigger code-mixing. Mixing Tamil and English among Tamil bilinguals facilitates communication and is performed for certain practical reasons in their day to day communication.

Key words: bilingual and multilingual domains, code-mixing, communication strategy, exposure to English, medium of instruction