



Negotiating Identity through Code-Switching: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat*

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: May 17, 2025 Revised: June 29, 2025 Accepted: June 08, 2025 Available Online: July 13, 2025	<i>In multilingual and multicultural contexts, language plays a vital role in shaping and expressing identity. One significant linguistic phenomenon, code-switching, the alternation between two or more languages or language varieties serve as a powerful tool for negotiating cultural belonging and self-representation. This study examines code-switching as a strategy of identity negotiation in Bapsi Sidhwa's <i>An American Brat</i> (1993), a novel that traces the transnational journey of Feroza Ginwalla, a young Parsi girl from Pakistan who undergoes a cultural transformation in the United States. The primary objective is to analyze how Feroza's code-switching reflects her evolving identity, highlighting tensions between tradition and modernity, and between her native and adopted cultures. This research adopts a sociolinguistic and discourse-analytic framework, drawing on the works of Carol Myers-Scotton and Peter Auer (1993) to interpret how code-switching conveys social positioning, resistance, and assimilation. The findings of the study suggest that Feroza's shifting language use mirrors her personal growth and the complexities of diasporic identity. Code-switching emerges as a site of cultural negotiation, where language both challenges and redefines boundaries. The study contributes to sociolinguistic and postcolonial scholarship and suggests further research into how multilingualism in literature reflects real-world identity formation among diasporic communities navigating hybrid cultural landscapes.</i>
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Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, the intersection of language, identity, and cultural negotiation has become a crucial area of study within sociolinguistics. Among the many tools individuals employ to navigate cultural boundaries, code-switching—the practice of alternating between two or more languages or varieties of language in conversation—emerges as a potent linguistic and identity-making strategy. Code-switching is not merely a reflection of bilingual or multilingual proficiency; rather, it is deeply embedded in the socio-cultural contexts in which speakers operate. It functions as a communicative resource, a means of identity expression, and a mechanism for negotiating power, belonging, and resistance.(Nilep, 2006).

This research focuses on the nuanced ways in which code-switching operates as a means of negotiating identity in Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *An American Brat* (1993). The novel follows the journey of Feroza Ginwalla, a young Parsi girl from Pakistan who travels to the United States and undergoes a profound transformation in her linguistic, cultural, and personal identity. Through Feroza's encounters with different linguistic and cultural environments, Sidhwa offers a compelling narrative of transnational identity formation, where code-switching plays a central role in shaping and expressing hybridity, resistance, and adaptation. (Akhter, 2020)

The choice of *An American Brat* as the primary text is motivated by its rich linguistic landscape and its exploration of diasporic experience. As Feroza transitions from a conservative Pakistani society to the liberal milieu of 1970s America, her language use reflects the tensions and negotiations inherent in her evolving identity. By examining moments of code-switching in the novel—between English, Urdu, and Parsi-inflected discourse—this study seeks to understand how language mediates the protagonist's identity reconstruction and her navigation between conflicting cultural expectations (Riaz et al. (2017).

Moreover, this research aligns with a growing body of scholarship that views code-switching not just as a grammatical or lexical phenomenon but as a discursive strategy embedded in broader social processes. Drawing on theories from scholars such as Carol Myers-Scotton, Peter Auer, and Leila Monaghan, the study employs a sociolinguistic and discourse-analytic framework to investigate how code-switching in *An American Brat* reflects larger issues of gender, diaspora, and postcolonial subjectivity (Schendl, 2015).

Statement of problem

Being a colonized nation, Pakistani literature influences Diasporic elements, including the language barrier, which is a common hurdle for cultural identity. Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat* narrates a young woman's struggle for identity between her Pakistani heritage and American cultural influences. Scholarly studies have demonstrated the themes of diaspora, immigration, gender, and cultural conflict in the novel, but there is a significant gap in the use of code-switching as a cultural and linguistic tool for identity.

Research objectives

1. To portray the cultural identity between Eastern and Western norms through code switching.
2. To showcase the use of multilingualism to portray belonging and alienation.

Research questions

1. How are cultural identities between Eastern and Western norms reflected through code switching?
2. How does Sidhwa use multilingualism to portray belonging and alienation?

Significance of the Study

This study fills a gap in the literature by examining how code-switching shape's diasporic identity, particularly in South Asian female protagonists. This dissertation employs sociolinguistic and postcolonial frameworks to investigate how Sidhwa employs linguistic changes and multilingual expression as indicators of power, self-definition, and belonging in a transnational setting, in addition to using them as literary strategies.

Literature Review

Language plays an incredibly significant part in uniting states and residents from each other because it is a method of distinguishing people from each other to govern or control them as a state or nation. The particular section has been comprised of two sub-sections. The first discusses the multiple aspects of language while, the second throws light on some studies that previously have been done on the particular novel under this investigation.

Language and Dialect, and Identity

Dialect is meant to communicate with each other either by spoken words or by writing. According to David Crystal, the function of the foreign language classroom can be summarized as follows: 'Foreign language learning has been defined with the affirmation of David Crystal (1985, p. which instantly makes me comprehend that dialect is the most crucial channel to popularize or boost the incidence of users. According to Babatunde (2002, p. 1), language is a means of existence. Concerning the writing of the interaction as well as its analysis in a Language, there are no strict rules but it is being seen with the eyes of a native of that one Language because it is a product of the incidence of incensement in stimulates the curiosity and interest of the reader towards the particular literary work and awaken the bibliophile to go through the manuscript.

Code-switching was first identified in works composed by West African Languages, and Ansre (1971) described it as an insertion of diverse chunks of English into the predominant bilingual context of Liberia as West African Languages attempt to show that English has had its dominance in West African Languages. Code-mixing can be defined as the use of one language with another language or the use of two different languages in the same speech passage. Code-switching: This is the process of speaking more than one language or language variety in a speech. The following assertion by Hamers and Blanc (1989, p. 35) will now come in handy. Code-mixing is the use of some or all the elements of one language in another language. They were of the viewpoint that a reallocation of using linguistic units (phrases, clauses, and everything is flexible, and better alternative strategies can be sought for discussion.

Code Mixing and Code-Switching

The interconnection of two main languages within a particular ideal sentence is called code-mixing, such as translation, code-switching, etc. Some scholars have opined that clarity varies when we speak of code-mixing and code-switching. Lanz (2011) claims that code mixture can refer to the same meaning as intra-sentential code switching, and for code mixing, Pfaff also described that it may be so.

Literature on bilingualism has benefited greatly from Ardila's (2005, pp. 60-81) proposal of the exchange between two languages in particular. The entire shift in the second language occurs over several sentences. According to him, a Code is of the nature of penalizing certain rights and empowering others, with a tendency to promote certain rights in society. Although the first of them is on the level of words, the second one, known as code-switching, is an exchange that shifts within the confines of a sentence and is mostly characteristic of spoken language. However,

several works and authors are coordinated for code-mixing, Köppe and Meisel (1995, p. 277, for instance, articulate that code-mixing is composed of semantic and pragmatic. Aberrations. Furthermore, Muysken (2000, p. 1) elucidated that code-mixing is a deviation among the grammatical aspects as well.

Previous Studies on American Brat by Bapsi Sidhwa

Gomaa (2014) argues about the novel as a coming-of-age novel depicting immigration to US as a rooting tension of ethnic roots and communal affiliations. The study suggests that while going through the diasporic dilemma in south Asian people while moving to colonizers nations forms a new hybrid community of people described as “imagined communities”. They are not geographically bounded but rather diasporic and transnational among a host of strangers.

Mahmood(2020) elaborate the politeness, impact dominant culture, and American preference for Bald on record strategy in the specific novel. The study explains how the American prefers direct, clear and imperative speech rather than the south Asians which use positive politeness to speak the facts and figures as they do not hold the power as the America hold as a dominant culture.

Bahisht et al. (2024) study that how American imperialism take over the identity and ethnicity of other community of people. As Zareen in general and Manek and Feroza in Particular, in the novel American Brat demonstrate that independence, freedom of speech and economical opportunities male them embrace their culture whole heartedly. Also how the America have influence over the third world countries.

Research Methodology

The methodology employed by the researchers in this study is qualitative. The study methodology chapter provides a thorough and understandable explanation of the entire design process, data sources, and data analysis. This inquiry uses the qualitative technique. The core of the qualitative method is a vast amount of knowledge, including constructivist, issue-oriented, political, and change-oriented knowledge (Creswell, 2013, p. 18). According to Lincoln (2000), a qualitative approach is a helpful tool for learning about the customs, traditions, and social mores of any group. Because of this, the researchers examined the text of Sidhwa's 1993 novel, which incorporates code-switched language, using a qualitative technique. The study would be very helpful to the readers.

Before diving into the actual research, the researchers offer some sources. The selected Sidhwa book (1993) serves as the study's textual base. The researchers collect the literary works (feminist perspective, religious aspect, and post-colonial element) of the book in addition to the original text to learn about the literary styles for producing the research paper. Examining the Urdu code-switched linguistic patterns in Sidhwa's 1993 Pakistani English book is the aim of the text study. When specific Urdu vocabulary and phrases are utilized in English fiction novels, there is evidence of code-switching. The researchers have applied Carol Myers-Scotton and Peter Auer's (1993) code switching model as the framework of this particular study. When examining code-mixing, two perspectives are noted: a linguistic and a social one. The researchers have divided the data into two groups. The morphological analysis of the chosen text at the lexical item level is described in Category 1. Urdu code-mixed language sociolinguistic analysis is covered in category two.

Data Analysis

Morphological Analysis

Using the purposive sample technique, the researchers have separated and chosen the phrases from Sidhwa's 1993 novel that include the English/Urdu code-mixing in the textual analysis section. To portray Pakistani language and culture, Sidhwa has used Urdu vocabulary in his works of Pakistani English literature, especially in the book. For example, the use of multiwords (words borrowed from two languages) suggests that code-switching is becoming more common in modern languages. Several words such as **Goondas** (Goons), **Gymkhana** (khana specified for a place), **Cholis** (blouses), **Landa Bazar** (market of secondhand exported goods), **Jana** (endearment for sweetheart), **Qawali** (music festive for Sufis), **Dupattas** (head scarves) shows that power (English language) replaces the identity of a national language (Urdu) of Pakistan. Therefore, the English people and native English writers desired to dominate Eastern culture through the powerful influence of language; however, the author of this story has attempted, either intentionally or inadvertently, to subvert this English language supremacy phenomenon.

Based on the data, the researchers identified and defined Urdu words that are representative of the Pakistani language and culture in Pakistani English fiction. For instance, the words like **Izzat** (Dignity), **Paans** (edible leaf with flavors), **Easop-gol** (psyllium husk) **Haveli** (bungalow), **Jhugees** (huts) and **Landa bazar (market of second hand exported goods)** indicates the culture and norm in the Pakistani National language. These Urdu words have been utilized to address different concepts, condiments, residences, and places.

Moreover, words like **Tandrostil** (healthy), **Aameen** (saying after a prayer), **Roti** (Bread), **Dhandar** (special rice served on auspicious occasions), **Dal** (grain), **Basmati** (type of rice), **Pakorras** (A Pakistani dish like patties) have also found that have utilized to represent the Edibles, Health and Prayers names of Pakistan. Furthermore, words like **Gora-chittas** (white), **Parjat** (caste), **Mullahs** (Muslim Priest), **Maulvi** (Priest), **Burqas** (full covering veils for Muslim women), **Agyari** (respected), **Madasara** (a Parsee ceremony) have also utilized to represent the Psychological Terms and Religions and Religious tags of Pakistan.

The Slogans like '**Roti, Kapre, Makan**' (bread, cloth, house), **Zindabad** (long-live), **Mushairas** (poetic symposium), **Mehfil** (ceremony), **Khandan** (family), **Taxi-wallas** (taxi-drivers), **Anjumans** (institution), **Panchayat** (committee) have been utilized to denote the social gatherings and organizations of Pakistan. The negative descriptions, gender, and political systems of Pakistan are denoted by the words **Zina** (adultery), **Gondas** (goons), **Uloo Sala Badmash** (abusages), **Guru** (master), **Police-thana** (Police-station), **Heejras** (gays).

Moreover, words like **Kaka** (uncle), **kaki** (aunt), **Baap** (father), **Jana** (endearment), **Baijee** (grandmother/old lady in family), **Jee** (saying yes), **Baba** (father), **Yaar** (friend), **Bibi** (calling a lady with respect), **Begum Bhutto** (wife of Bhutto) utilizes the modes of addressing of Pakistan.

Sociolinguistic Analysis

The ideological, political, cultural, and social activities that are present in modern society are identified by sociolinguistics (ies). A society is a collection of individuals who have coexisted and coordinated with one another. The phenomena of globalization are facilitated by the maximum usage of language.

In the 1993 book *An American Brat*, Sidhwa depicts the horrifying view of society that results from people relocating overseas for financial, professional, or personal reasons. Consequently, Feroza identifies herself as a new person after moving to America to his uncle Manek for her

vacation after matric exams. She was a shy girl, according to her mother, a conservative girl who was becoming like the Mullahs of the Pakistani Muslim Community. After she visits America, her first encounter in a security checkpoint from the living system to the capital glory of white people, which allures her, and she finds herself soon becoming like a brat according to her Parsee community. She falls in love with a Jewish boy and starts to live with him without any commitment, but they soon fall apart due to religious pressure and different social backgrounds. Her relationships and adventures shape her alternately hilarious and terrifying perceptions of America. Feroza's family in Pakistan, meanwhile, is in delicious turmoil over the possibility that American ways will ruin her, which later came true according to their Parsee community. Moreover, Sidhwa (1993) depicts the pitiful situation of Pakistani society where religious minorities protect themselves through the transformation of their names based on religion. A society's culture consists of whatever it is one must know or believe to operate in a manner acceptable to its members and to do so in any role that they accept for themselves.

Language, Power, and Identity

In any culture, people may negotiate, fight, and have discussions thanks to language as a social practice. Languages and language usage reveal "who we are," and language and language use have a role in how we define reality (Wodak, 2003). The model for ideology is identity. Language develops from life's experiences, needs, and demands. Despite being closely linked to ideology, language has more purposes than just facilitating communication (ies). A woman is always shown as weak, submissive, helpless, obedient, and innocent, while a male is always shown as dominant, strong, and authoritative, is considered to have strength in their fists, and women are said to have power in their mouths. People are viewed as belonging to the powerful elite group. English language proficiency is seen as a sign of superior social standing. As a result, the affluent class describes their kids as attending English-medium schools to advance their social, cultural, and political standing. Rahman (1990) asserts that the English language is seen as both a modernizing feature and a symbol of power. Feroza, the main character, is a Parsee, which is a religious group within the Pakistani society's power system. She works with her family to identify her identity because she is a minority.

Sidhwa's (1993) novel utilizes the English language to illustrate the trend toward globalization. To get an outstanding position in Pakistan and to empower oneself, one must master Urdu and English. In this study, power ideology and social identity are revealed through the usage of code-switching.

Findings & Discussion

Through code-switching or ideological positioning from many perspectives of religious (particularly Muslim and Parsee) lifestyles of Pakistan's metropolitan metropolis, Lahore, the current study has highlighted several beliefs and ideologies. In Sidhwa's 1993 novel, a highly successful story is told that emphasizes the comprehensive description of social and cultural practices, norms, conventions, values, and power dynamics. The English fictional book of Pakistan also expressed a variety of socioeconomic identities through the usage of Urdu terminology. According to research, the novel centers on disgruntled Parsee communities in Pakistani society, who lose their identity as a result of being treated like second-class citizens in developed nations like the United States. Sidhwa has also mocked the social as well as religious detachments in today's Pakistani society.

Hence, the sociolinguistic phenomena of code-switching in Sidhwa's 1993 fictitious work, written in Pakistan, have been predicted by the experts. The latest study advances important sociolinguistics fields. Additionally, the researchers looked into the particular language issues that

are directly connected to code-switching. It also aids in illuminating how globalization and modernism have influenced language creation. In addition, the current study provides a clear and concise understanding of code-switching in contrast to its ideological, cultural, and similar features.

Suggestions for Future Researches

Currently, the research emphasizes the details around the ideological portrayal of language in Sidhwa's (1993) book *An American Brat* through code-switching. The present study could potentially be applied to other English literary works, using different modern frameworks for code-switching. Future studies could look into topics like the mistreatment of minorities in Sidhwa's 1993 novel, the diasporic element of third-world countries in superpowers, and the marginalization of women in patriarchal societies.

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