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LINGUISTIC MIRRORS AND FRACTURED SELVES: REFLECTING CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN SHAMSIE'S BURNT SHADOWS

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Abstract

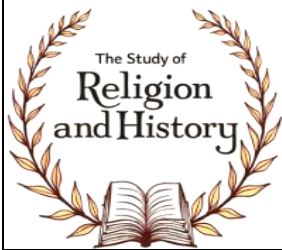
*This study analyzes the relationship between identity creation and code-switching in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* from a sociolinguistic perspective. The study employs a quantitative research methodology based on a self-designed questionnaire administered among 50 multilingual participants to investigate language behavior in the real world, with an emphasis on how language switching functions as a tool for inclusion, exclusion, and resistance. The findings indicate that participants often associate several languages with distinct facets of their identities, much like the multilingual and transnational experiences of the characters in the book, such as Hiroko, Raza, and Kim. Code-switching is shown to be both a pragmatic linguistic choice and a symbolic act of negotiating cultural affiliation and self-representation. This research contributes to broader discourses on language, identity, and postcolonial mobility by comparing the sociolinguistic realities of contemporary multilingual speakers with Shamsie's literary depictions of displaced and hybrid identities.*

Introduction

Sociolinguistics is "the descriptive study of the effect of any and all aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations, and context," according to Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (2008). While this research investigates how language affects society, it deals with how society affects language. According to Paulston and Tucker (2003), sociolinguistics is related to the anthropology of language and thus concentrates on research that examines how various human groups that differ from one another in terms of factors like gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic and educational position, religion, demographics, etc. employ diverse language varieties and registers. Consequently, studies that examine idiolects, sociolects, and differences in language use across social classes, ethnic groups, and races are the main emphasis of sociolinguistics. The study of sociolinguistics focuses on how languages are used and how these uses differ depending on the location, social class, and type of language. In sociolinguistics, field of linguistics that concentrates its research on the social and linguistic behaviors of speech groups. This is particularly pertinent to code-switching, which is the disruptive usage of one language with another.

Background of the Study

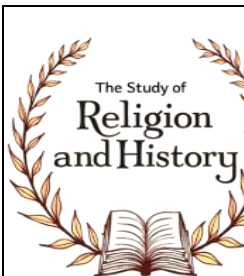
One of the key components of bilingual speakers' or foreign language learners' communicative ability is code-switching, a unique linguistic behavior. Numerous sociolinguistic traits and characteristics have an impact on code-switching. Since bilingual



speech is always "socially embedded," code-switching is closely related to and derived from it. As correctly noted by Weinreich (1953), "when a language contact situation is analyzed in detail, the interplay of socio-cultural circumstances and linguistic occurrences are evident. The idea that language use and language change are dictated by "contact-induced" factors in the language situation, is the basis for the connection between code-switching and sociolinguistics, the study of language in social contexts, according to Thomason and Kaufman (1988). They also contend that, independent of structural language factors, people's code-switching behavior is determined by the social circumstances in a particular contact settings and relationships between their spoken languages. Code-switching is a complex, regulated, and methodical communication technique employed by bilinguals with linguistic competence to accomplish a range of communication objectives. It is the result of a complex web of interrelated sociolinguistic factors that affect the pragmatic, structural, semantic, and sociolinguistic characteristics of the languages that bilinguals speak. Similarly, code-switching is described by Gumperz as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of portions of speech belonging to two separate grammatical subsystems or systems. Intra-sentential switches are referred in this definition. More generally, the phenomenon is described as a "change by a speaker [or writer] from one language or language variety to another" by Richards and Rodgers (1986). The phrase "code-switching" was used differently by different researchers. Bokamba et al. (1988), for example, have used the phrase "code-switching" in diverse ways due to code-mixing. They claim that code-mixing refers to such alterations inside a single sentence, while code-switching refers to transitions between sentences in two different languages spoken by bilinguals or multilinguals. Other scholars define code-switching as linguistic or switch movements that occur [inter-sententially] between sentences or either at the lexical level or at the structural and syntactic level within utterances [intra-sentential]. As speakers think in a contact scenario, bilinguals or multilinguals use code switching to better correctly convey the desired meaning. Language becomes a potent tool for negotiating identity, culture, and belonging in multilingual and postcolonial literature, going beyond simple communication.

Statement of the Problem

The 2009 transnational novel *Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie, which spans continents and cultures, eloquently demonstrates how linguistic decisions—in particular, code-switching—act as crucial indicators of cultural hybridity and identity change. Characters in the book travel across time and space, from Pakistan to post-9/11 America, from Nagasaki to Delhi. Their language use reflects their changing affiliations and changing self-concepts as they traverse linguistic and cultural boundaries. Sociolinguistics has studied code-switching extensively as a strategy for identity performance and negotiation (Heller, 1992). Code-switching is defined as the alternation between two or more languages or language varieties within a single interaction (Gumperz, 1982). Characters like Raza Konrad, Sajjad Ashraf, and Hiroko Tanaka in the *Burnt Shadows* represent the sociolinguistic realities of hybridity and displacement. Their linguistic transitions between Urdu, English, German, and Japanese are not coincidental; rather, they are narrative devices that illustrate the conflict between cultural, personal, and national identities. According to Heller (1992), code-switching is a political and symbolic act that speakers use to position themselves socially and ideologically, in addition to being a reflection of linguistic proficiency. In a similar vein, Myers-Scotton (1993) contends that language choice is frequently strategic, signifying personal identity, power dynamics, and

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group membership. In Shamsie's book, characters frequently traverse multilingual and multicultural settings that necessitate ongoing self-reinvention, making these theories particularly relevant. Furthermore, the book explores what Bhabha (1994) refers to as the "Third Space," a transitional area where linguistic and cultural negotiation is used to create hybrid identities. Code-switching becomes a symbolic performance of resistance, adaptation, exclusion, and belonging in *Burnt Shadows*, which can be viewed as a literary representation of this space from a sociolinguistic perspective. In order to illustrate identity construction in the lives of her diasporic characters the research shows that Shamsie uses code-switching as a narrative and symbolic technique, which is examined in this essay. It analyzes how language serves as a site of memory, trauma, agency, and belonging in the transnational and multilingual settings of the novel by drawing on sociolinguistic theory.

Delimitation of the Research

This analysis is delimited to Kamila Shamsie's 2009 book *Burnt Shadows* and does not go beyond her other writings or those of her contemporaries. *Burnt Shadows'* rich linguistic landscape, transnational setting, and examination of identity through multilingual and multicultural interactions are the reasons it was chosen as the exclusive subject. Examining how language serves as a tool for both adaptation and alienation in various sociopolitical contexts is made possible by the novel's narrative, which crosses continents and decades. Furthermore, the focus of the analysis is on two main characters, Raza Hazara and Hiroko Tanaka, whose linguistic decisions and cultural shifts offer the most striking examples of the research questions. Other characters are only taken into account when their interactions with Hiroko and Raza highlight linguistic and identity-related concerns. Additionally, the study only looks at the novel's original English version; translations or adaptations in other languages or media are not taken into account. Code-switching in fictional dialogue and narration in relation to the sociolinguistic positioning of characters is the specific focus of the investigation. Last but not the least, although historical and geopolitical settings (such as World War II, Partition, and politics after 9/11) are essential to the novel's setting, they are only mentioned in passing in terms of how they affect linguistic behavior and identity negotiation rather than serving as the main subject of inquiry.

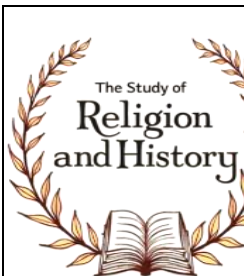
Literature

Review

Sociolinguistic research has long focused on code-switching, which is the switching between two or more languages or language varieties in a single conversation or discourse (Gumperz, 1982). Early research mostly considered code-switching to be a linguistic or structural phenomenon, but more recent work has focused on its social and identity-related purposes (Heller, 1992& Auer, 1998). This change emphasizes how language functions as a tool for identity construction, performance, and negotiation in multilingual settings.

(a) The Sociolinguistic Practice of Code-Switching

One of the first critics to think of code-switching as a contextualization cue that enables speakers to convey social meanings, alignments, and group memberships was John J. Gumperz (1982). In order to highlight how language choices are intricately woven into social structures, he made a distinction between situational and metaphorical code-switching. The groundbreaking Norwegian study by Blom and Gumperz (1972) showed how members of the community signaled changes in social roles and relational dynamics by using code-switching to move between formal and informal social spheres. By presenting code-switching as a means

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of linguistic resistance and a strategy for negotiating identity and power, Heller (1992) broadened this viewpoint. According to Heller, code-switching is closely related to identity formation, sociopolitical positioning, and access to social capital rather than just language proficiency. Her study of French-English bilinguals in Canada showed how speakers strategically employ code-switching to assert alternative identities and subvert prevailing ideologies.

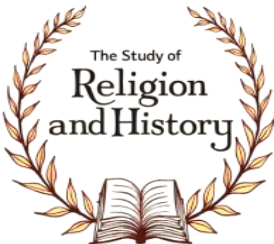
(b) Use of Code-Switching to Create an Identity

Many people now acknowledge code-switching as creating and enacting identity (Zentella, 1997). This ethnographic study of Puerto Rican children a potent tool for in New York City by Ana Celia Zentella is a prime example of how bilingual speakers use code-switching to communicate cultural affiliations, fight marginalization, and negotiate linguistic expectations in peer-group, school, and home settings. Her study emphasized how identity in bilingual contexts is dynamic and fluid. In a similar vein, Bailey (2000) investigated code-switching among Dominican Americans and made the case that language choice played a crucial role in controlling racial and ethnic identities. His research revealed that speakers switched between Spanish and English to accommodate their audience as well as to create complex identities that influenced factors like immigration status, class, and generation. The interactional component of code-switching was further highlighted by Auer (1998), who contended that speakers co-construct identity and meaning in real time through language alternation. According to this viewpoint, identity is an emergent aspect of discourse that is influenced by continuous linguistic decisions rather than a fixed attribute. Because it examines code-switching explicitly in fictional literature, the current study differs from the previously stated studies.

Language is frequently examined as a site of hybridity and resistance in postcolonial literary studies. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989), postcolonial literature reappropriates English, the language of the colonizer, in order to reflect hybrid identities and challenge colonial authority. In this context, Homi Bhabha's (1994) idea of the "third space," which postulates that cultural identity is created in an interstitial space where various languages, traditions, and histories converge, is especially significant. This idea is particularly pertinent when examining characters in *Burnt Shadows* who are constantly negotiating with different linguistic and cultural systems, such as Hiroko and Raza. There has been some scholarly discussion of Shamsie's work in relation to transnational language and identity. Detailed sociolinguistic analyses of code-switching in *Burnt Shadows* are still lacking, despite these contributions. Few studies have explicitly looked at how Shamsie's characters negotiate identity through language, especially through code-switching and multilingual discourse, despite the fact that her transnational themes are frequently discussed. By using sociolinguistic frameworks to examine how language shapes character identity and negotiates power in multilingual contexts, this study seeks to fill that gap.

Research Objectives

- To investigate how *Burnt Shadows* uses code-switching as a literary and sociolinguistic device to represent the characters' changing identities across geopolitical and cultural divides.
- To investigate how language choice and multilingualism influence national, cultural, and personal identity in the diasporic contexts.

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Research Questions

1. How does Kamila Shamsi use code switching as a linguistic mirror to reflect the transformation of identity across cultural and geopolitical boundaries in *Burnt shadows*?
2. How does multilingualism serve as a symbol of resistance, exclusion, or inclusion in the social and political contexts of the characters?

Population of the Study

Population of the study consists of multilingual individuals residing in multicultural society in Pakistan. These individuals regularly switch languages as part of their daily communication practices across educational, professional and social domains.

Sampling Technique

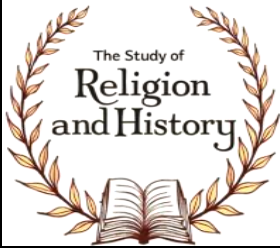
Convenience sampling was used to carry out this research. Convenience sampling is a sampling technique that involves the sample being drawn from that part of the population that is close to hand.

Sampling

Sample that was selected to carry out this research consisted of graduates that were easily available and used to switch between two or more than two languages to carry out their educational, professional and social purposes. 50 graduates were selected for this purpose and an online survey form was disseminated to them to get responses

Overview of the Novel

Through the lives of its main characters, Kamila Shamsie's 2009 transnational novel *Burnt Shadows* examines the intertwined histories of colonialism, migration, war, and identity. The novel begins in Nagasaki, 1945, where the Japanese heroine Hiroko Tanaka, who lost her fiancé, Konrad Weiss, in the attack, survives the atomic bombing. The traumatic event has left Hiroko physically and psychologically scarred. She travels to Delhi, Karachi, New York, and finally Afghanistan, where she meets people from different cultures and languages. Shamsie examines how linguistic exchanges, cross-cultural interactions, and geopolitical forces shape identity through these shifting contexts. In strange linguistic and cultural contexts, the characters are continuously figuring out where they fit in. For example, her adopted son Raza must navigate a complex multilingual world shaped by English, Urdu, and the politics of post-9/11 global security, while Hiroko must learn Urdu when she moves to Karachi and adapts her identity to fit within a new cultural context. The novel's narrative structure reflects postcolonial and diasporic themes, emphasizing the fragmentation and hybridity of modern identities. As Bhabha (1994) argues, such identities are often formed in the "third space"—a liminal zone where languages, cultures, and histories converge and create new forms of selfhood. *Burnt Shadows* embodies this space through its characters' linguistic negotiations and geographic displacements. Language and code-switching are symbolic acts that signify cultural alignment, resistance, and transformation in addition to providing realistic depictions of multilingual environments. Hiroko's transition from Japanese to English and then to Urdu, for instance, reflects her evolving sense of identity and home as she gradually becomes more at ease speaking these languages. Raza's internal struggle between cultural loyalty and surviving in a politically unstable world is revealed by his multilingualism. Such linguistic practices are essential to comprehending how people in multilingual contexts negotiate their identities (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). This makes *Burnt Shadows* a sociolinguistic narrative in

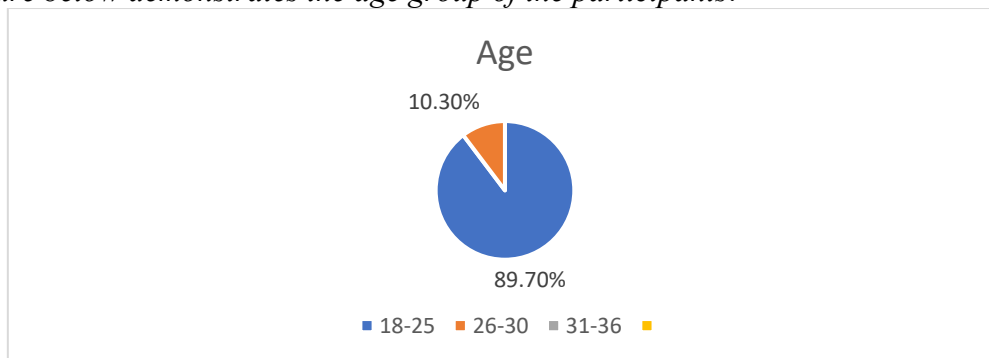


which language serves as a fundamental tool for identity formation, cultural memory, and belonging in addition to being a tale of survival and international politics. The novel's examination of language learning, code-switching, and intercultural communication highlights the ways in which language influences how characters see themselves and are seen by others.

Quantitative Analysis

Figure 1

The figure below demonstrates the age group of the participants.



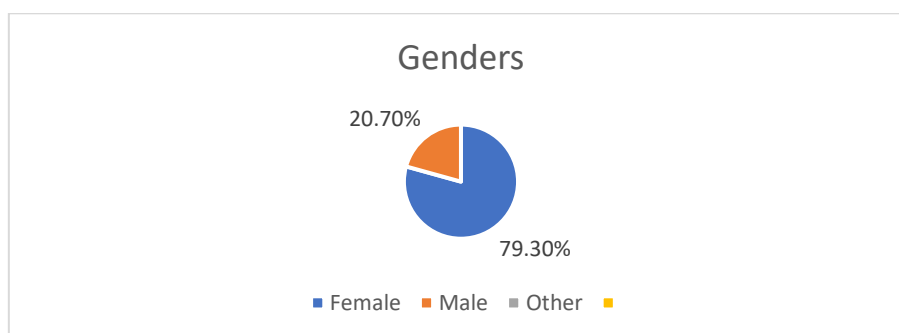
Note. The chart above demonstrates the age group of the participants who participated in this research. The results showed that 89.70% ranged between 18-25 years and 10.30% ranged 26-30, respectively.

Analysis

Like Raza in *Burnt Shadows*, younger people often experiment with language to adapt to different social circumstances.

Figure 2

The figure demonstrates gender of the people who participated in this study.



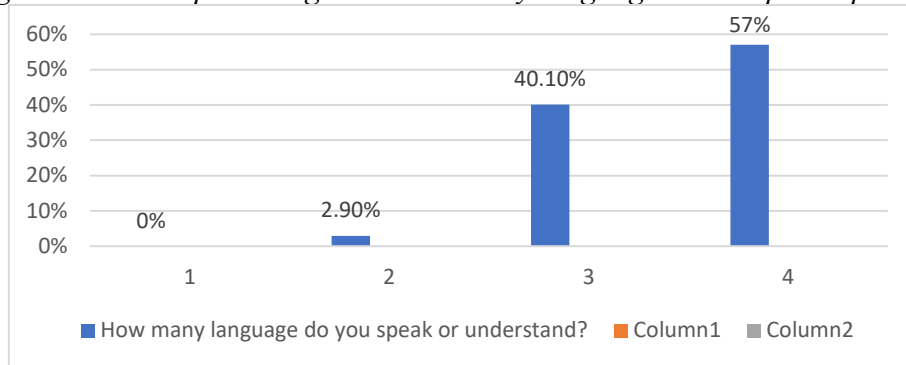
Note. The question was designed to see which gender participated in the research mostly. The data shows that 79.30% participants were female and 20.70% were male. It shows that female participants were more inclined towards this.

Analysis

Nearly equal gender representation ensures that responses reflect a variety of bilingual experiences. In *Burnt Shadows*, gender affects how language is utilized to address social expectations, especially for female characters like Kim and Hiroko.

Figure 3

The figure shows the percentage that how many languages do the participants know.



Note. The chart above demonstrates that 57% people know four languages, 40.10% are familiar with three languages and 2.90% know only two languages. This data indicates that Pakistani society is composed of bilingual and multilingual speakers.

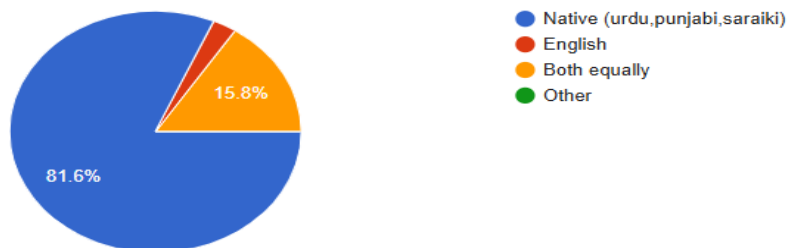
Analysis:

Since most respondents were bilingual or multilingual, language switching is a common occurrence. This is comparable to the world of *Burnt Shadows*, where characters thrive in spite of linguistic and cultural obstacles.

Figure 4

The figure displays the percentage of the language mostly spoken by the participants in their daily life.

Which language do you use most in daily life?



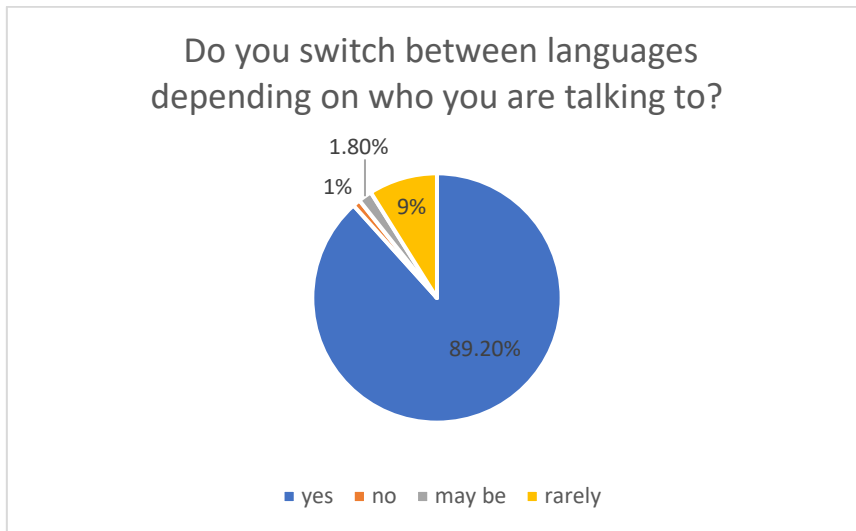
Note. The chart above displays that 81.6% participants used their native languages which may be Urdu, Punjabi and Saraiki while, 2.6% people opted English as their daily language and 15.8% people used both the languages (Native and English) equally.

Analysis

The almost equal everyday usage of native tongues and English reflects a composite cultural identity. Hiroko's blending of English, Japanese, and subsequently Urdu in *Burnt Shadows* illustrates how language choice influences one's ability to express oneself.

Figure 5

The figure shows whether the participants change their language according to the listener or not.



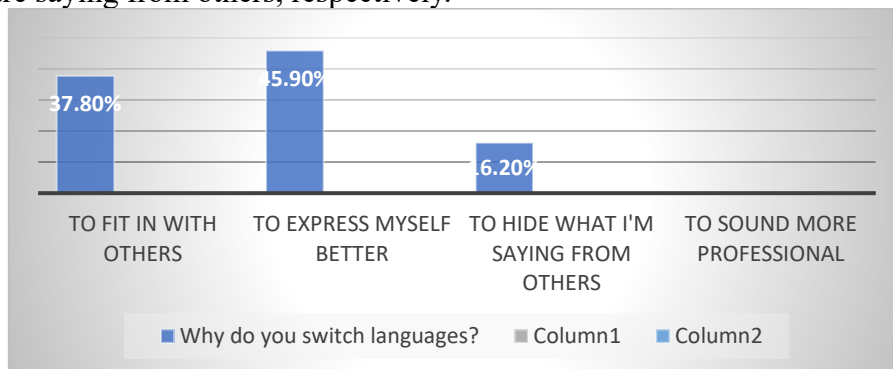
Note. The chart demonstrates that 89.20 % participants changed their language while talking to others whereas, 9% switched their language rarely. A small percentage of 1.80 and 1 may not switched their language. Data analysis showed that people changed their language according to the listeners.

Analysis

The high proportion of respondents who move between languages often or seldom indicates that language adaptation is a useful tactic for negotiating social circumstances. By frequently transitioning between English and Urdu, Raza is able to navigate a variety of political and cultural spheres in *Burnt Shadows*.

Figure 6

The figures demonstrates that 45.90% participants switch language to express themselves better while, 37.80% and 16.20% participants switch language to fit in with others and hide what they are saying from others, respectively.



Analysis

The fact that most people switch to better express themselves and fit in emphasizes how language serves as both a social and emotional instrument. Respondents show that, like Hiroko,

who learns Urdu to connect with her new Pakistani family, multilingualism is often about belonging and emotional expression.

Figure 7

The figure shows that 42.10% participants feel confident while switching languages similarly, 57.9% and 1.4 % feel natural and awkward, respectively.



Analysis

As demonstrated by the 50% who feel secure and the 30% who feel natural, switching languages regularly strengthens identification. The 10% who feel like a different person, however, are represented by characters like Kim from *Burnt Shadows*, who frequently feels like a "foreigner" in her own family due to linguistic issues.

Figure 8

The figure displays that 87% participants connected with more people because of switching of language while 11% were not sure and 2 % did not engage in with other people.

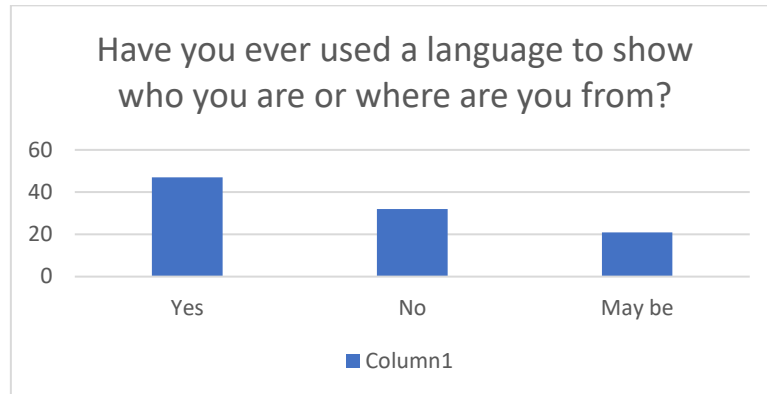
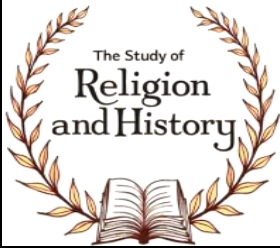


Analysis

Language has the power to unite individuals, as evidenced by the 90% of respondents who believe that switching promotes ties. Speaking several languages is essential to Raza's ability to get along with different social groupings in *Burnt Shadows*.

Figure 9

The figure shows that 47% participants used language as to show their identity whereas, 21% were not sure about this and 32% did not use language to show their identity.

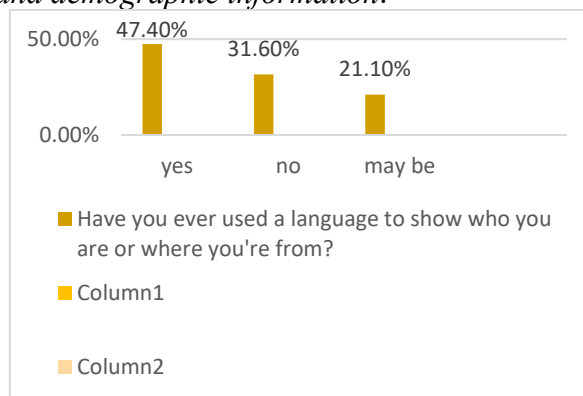


Analysis

Language has the power to unite individuals, as evidenced by the 90% of respondents who believe that switching promotes ties. Speaking several languages is essential to Raza's ability to get along with different social groupings in *Burnt Shadows*.

Figure 10

The percentage in the figure shows that 47.40% used language to give their personal and demographic information while 21.10% were not sure and 31.60% did not use language to provide their personal and demographic information.



Analysis

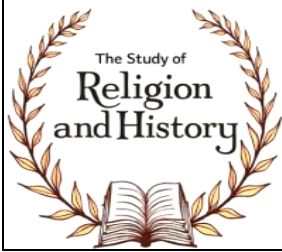
80% of people use language as a means of identifying themselves. Hiroko's purposeful use of Japanese phrases in *Burnt Shadows*, years after the atomic attack, shows how language preserves social and personal identity.

Which language makes you feel most like “yourself”? Why?

Analysis

Speaking their original language—Saraiki, Punjabi or Urdu—makes individuals feel closer to their family, according to 60% of respondents. 30% of respondents believe that English is a professional language with global connections. 10% mixed indicates that their feelings vary according to the circumstances.

Participants reflect Hiroko's experience, where she has adapted to English and Urdu in other places, yet Japanese remains her primary language of identity. Language is deeply rooted in cultural and emotional identity.



Can you describe a time when switching languages changed how you felt or how others saw you?

Analysis

The result of switching to English is being treated more seriously (professionalism). Speaking in one's mother tongue makes one feel comfortable and accepted. Code-switching can often make someone feel isolated if they are not fluent.

Language shifts have an impact on one's self-perception, social status, and acceptability. This dynamic is demonstrated by Raza's transformation in *Burnt Shadows*, where access and trust are often determined by language use in diverse societies.

Do you feel like you are a different version of yourself when you speak another language? Please explain.

Analysis

According to 55% of those surveyed, they felt different, more formal, or shy. According to 35% of respondents, it depends on the situation. They feel the same way, as 10% replied no.

Most people undergo minor or major personality changes when speaking different languages. Kim's battle with Urdu and English in *Burnt Shadows* reveals her shattered identity, which has been influenced by the cultural norms of both languages.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Code-Switching and Identity Transformation in *Burnt Shadows*: A Table of Textual Analysis

Textual references	Character and Context	Language	Purpose of code switching
She had begun learning Urdu... copying out words and practicing the curved letters.”	In Karachi, Hiroko is trying to fit in with a new community.	English → Urdu	Language integration and identity adaptation in a new cultural context
Salaam alaikum,” she said, her accent still foreign but familiar enough to be understood.	Hiroko's greeting in Urdu	Urdu	Social alignment, cultural etiquette, and a desire to fit in
How strange to have to speak English in India,” she said, “when once it was a language of power.”	In Delhi, Hiroko and Elizabeth discuss colonialism.	English	Discuss the dynamics of postcolonial linguistic power.
Sometimes she dreamed in Japanese. But when	Later in life, Hiroko lived in Pakistan.	Japanese (internal) → English/Urdu (external)	Identity shift, memory, and displacement

she awoke, it slipped away.”			
You think in English, don't you?” James asked. “Even when you're speaking something else.”	Pointing to internalized Western identity, James to Raza	English → other languages	Layered identity and internal colonization
Allah Hafiz,” she said gently. It felt right now, even if it hadn't before.	Hiroko saying goodbye in a devout Urdu	Urdu	Cultural belonging and emotional congruence

These textual references, I have been taken from page no. 60 from the 2009 Bloomsbury edition of *Burnt Shadows* for my qualitative research.

Findings and Discussions

These instances demonstrate that code-switching in *Burnt Shadows* is a purposeful narrative and symbolic device rather than just a reflection of multilingual environments. Characters change their language to:

- Adjust to new cultural environments: (Hiroko is learning Urdu).
- Handle power dynamics: (English in colonial and postcolonial contexts)
- Emotional memory: (dreams in Japanese)
- Indicate changes in identity and hybridity: (Raza's internal Englishness)

Characters in Kamila Shamsie's 2009 novel *Burnt Shadows* deftly navigate international sociopolitical upheavals by assimilating into linguistically varied environments. Language becomes a key indicator of identity in places like Nagasaki, Delhi, Karachi, New York, and Afghanistan. It positions characters as either insiders or outsiders and shapes their hybrid selves through language choice and code-switching. According to sociolinguistics, language serves as both a social boundary and a means of communication (Heller, 1992). Hiroko's experience learning Urdu in Pakistan represents her wish to fit in, but her foreign accent keeps her identified as an outsider in *Burnt Shadows*. For example, her effort is recognized when she says "Salaam alaikum," but her accent reveals where she is from. Another example from text which shows the element of language fragmentation in this novel: ‘Come’, the boy said, taking Harry’s arm with the physical familiarity of Pakistani men to which the American hadn’t yet become accustomed, and pulling him indoors. ‘I’ll tell Aba’ (p. 154) "Aba" means "father" in Urdu. Speaking to an American in English is Raza, the polyglot. The author skillfully weaves the Urdu code "Aba" with the "physical familiarity of Pakistani men" in place of the English word for the father, helping her English readers understand the value of family relationships among Pakistanis. Raza emphasizes the value she places on her original culture through her usage of native language by avoiding the pronouns father, daddy, and papa while speaking especially to an English guy. Language use and code-switching are essential to negotiating identity, power, and belonging in postcolonial, transnational contexts, according to an analysis of Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*. The data reveal the following important key findings:

Code-Switching as a Sign of Inclusion and Belonging

According to the study, code-switching serves as a barrier as well as a bridge. Despite her foreignness, Hiroko Tanaka makes a conscious effort to navigate belonging in a new sociocultural environment by using Urdu. Her foreign accent's tenacity, however, emphasizes that cultural acceptance is not always ensured by linguistic adaptation (Heller, 1992). Similar to this, Raza's ability to switch between Urdu and English based on the situation demonstrates that while linguistic fluency makes access possible, his identity is still shattered by conflicting loyalties. These behaviors support Gumperz's (1982) theory that code-switching serves as a contextualization cue that communicates group membership, identity, and alignment.

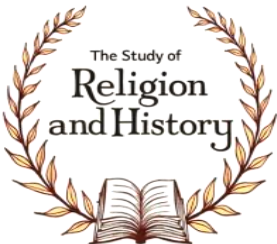
Colonial and Postcolonial Power Relations through Language

The results demonstrate how historical power structures are reflected in language. Throughout the book, English is consistently linked to professionalism, authority, and international mobility. Hiroko's comment regarding the use of English in India, for instance, emphasizes how colonial languages continue to dominate postcolonial societies (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989). This notion is further supported by Raza's hiring by US intelligence due to his fluency in English, which demonstrates how language turns into a tool of neo-colonial control (Canagarajah, 2013).

As a result, English serves as a limiting and liberating force, allowing characters to access international institutions while simultaneously separating them from their own cultural heritage. The postcolonial linguistic condition, in which language serves as a site of both resistance and power, is characterized by this tension.

Synopsis of Key Findings

Themes	Key Findings
Displacement of Language and Identity	Language is used by characters to deal with trauma and displacement; shifting identities are reflected in dreams and thoughts (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).
Exclusion and Belonging	While code-switching indicates cultural adaptation, characters are identified as outsiders based on their history and accent (Heller, 1992 & Gumperz, 1982).
Identity Hybrid	Multilingualism fosters layered identities negotiated in the “third space” (Bhabha, 1994).
Postcolonial Systems of Power	In postcolonial and international contexts, English maintains its institutional power and symbolic capital (Ashcroft et al., 1989; Phillipson, 1992).

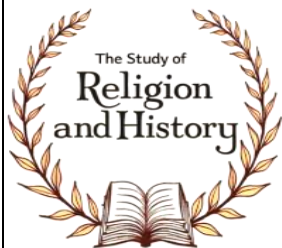
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Conclusion

This study has examined how code-switching serves as an essential linguistic and sociocultural tactic, in order to help characters in Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* negotiate identity, belonging, and power in a postcolonial, transnational world. It is evident from a sociolinguistic perspective that language in the book is closely related to issues of trauma, memory, selfhood, and cultural adaptation and serves as more than just a tool for communication. Significant identity changes are experienced by the characters, especially Hiroko and Raza, and are both reflected in and influenced by their linguistic decisions and limitations. Their ability to navigate several languages—Japanese, English, Urdu, and German—each with its own social, emotional, and political significance reflects their mobility across geopolitical borders. In line with Bhabha's idea of the "third space" and Canagarajah's (2013), concept of the translingual subject, these acts of code-switching do more than just reflect multilingual reality; they actually perform the construction of hybrid identities. The novel also highlights the ways in which language either reinforces or challenges power structures. As a colonial and international language, English preserves symbolic capital, allowing for global mobility and access to institutions while also separating people from their cultural heritage. This supports findings from Ashcroft et al. (1989) and Phillipson (1992) by demonstrating the persistence of linguistic imperialism and postcolonial tensions. The importance of reading literature from a sociolinguistic perspective is emphasized by this study, especially when analyzing postcolonial and transnational works. It creates opportunities for more investigation into how multilingual narratives both reflect and transform our perceptions of shifting global identities.

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