Dynamics of Code-Mixing: The Case of Urdu in TV

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Abstract

This paper discusses the dynamics of code-mixing of Urdu in the context of TV commercials which are relayed from Delhi Doordarshan and which are generally classified as Hindi commercials. This paper discusses various factors which make Urdu as one of the foremost choices for code mixing in TV commercials.

Key Words: Advertising, Code Mixing, Communication Strategies, Blending

Introduction

Code-mixing is a well-attested phenomenon of the human linguistic behaviour and socio-linguists have tried to study this phenomenon in many of its facets. Noteworthy in the area, is research on mixing of Spanish and English in United States and Indian languages (Hindi and Tamil) and English in India (Annamalai, 1981). Much of the work on code-mixing seems to have concentrated on bilinguals and bilingual settings. Apart from studying the structural aspects of different languages that readily mix or get mixed, scholars have focused on constraints – viz. linguistic, psychological and situational in code-mixing. Not much seems to be available on new communicational situations and strategies which have resulted due to advancement in mass communication networks. One does not really know whether this development has made an impact on code-mixing and code-switching behaviour of the people.

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Fatihi (1991) through his study of the language of TV commercials (those which are relayed from Delhi Doordarshan and which are generally classified as Hindi commercials) has drawn the attention of linguists towards a unique situation of code mixing. Unique because here neither the 'bilingual' is involved nor much of the psychological variables of 'prestige' is present. Some advertisement writer or group of writers sitting in the cozy corners of their offices or, may be, some hotels try to feel the pulse of the consumers and strive to churn out the advertisements which they visualize as acceptable to all kinds of consumers. The result is the emergence of a linguistic register which is unique and unparalleled. Linguistically, it has a balanced and beautiful blending of elements from languages such as Urdu and English.

Fatihi on the basis of his probe (1991) has given many areas[1] of code-mixing in the language of TV commercials which he collected for his study. All these areas can be corroborated by further study. The present author himself, sometimes ago, not in a distant past, collected 30 commercials (given in appendix) and subjected them to analysis from viewpoint of code-mixing. He found the following areas wherein Urdu[2] is used as a code for mixing.

1. Noun insertion (e.g. ekənokha<u>ehsas</u>ponḍssabun)
2.Adjective insertion (e.g. sadharəṇ sastiṭikIyakiədhurisəfai<u>zIddi</u>məilkamuqabllanəhĩ kərsəkti)
3. Verb insertions (e.g. ye godrejheərḍəihəiIselakhõ logõ ne pure bhərose ke sath<u>azmaya</u>əurəpnayahəi)
4.Synonimity (e.g. evərəṣṭməsalõ se bhojəntəyyarxub<u>məzedar</u>xub<u>zaIqedar</u>)
5. Conjuntive elements (e.g. sərfækzeldetahəikəṛisəfayi<u>məgər</u>pyar se).

In this brief paper, our concern is neither to make an in-depth study of the areas of code-mixing nor to discuss its constraints or variables in relation

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[1]For details see Fatihi (1991) .

[2]Consideration of the case of English for code-mixing in TV commercials is beyond the scope of this paper.

to the language of TV commercials. Instead, our aim here has been to probe and focus on the dynamics of mixing Urdu as a code and to know what factors are responsible for Urdu being mixed. There may be many factors. In order to get at some conclusion we need to consider various issues such as the psychological relationship of the advertisement writer with Urdu, structural aspects of Urdu and Hindi, which has many fluid zones wherein these languages can be easily maleated. Further the interplay of social forces vis-à-vis language also has to be looked into. Therefore, while exploring these factors social, psychological and linguistic dimensions of the issue involved need to be considered. In the following paragraphs we attempted to discuss a few of these.

First and foremost, a TV advertisement semantically has a special content. It has a message. Getting the message imbibed into the consumers' mind is of paramount importance here. Therefore, for special content the language also has to be special and persuasive. The purity (of language) is not a sacrocent issue here, contrary to what the pundits of linguistic purity think.

At the same time language has to be catchy, attractive, precise, clear, glamorous, cute and interesting. Further it should also be acceptable to all kinds of consumers. In order to achieve this end many gimmicksare resorted to. One of them perhaps is the linguistic device of code-mixing. If so, why Urdu has a code? True in the last forty years has slid down the scale vis-à-vis its instrumental value. But given the multilingual setting as we have in our situation, Urdu has not lost its sheen as an effective medium of communication. Therefore, in the context of TV commercials, the writer (of the commercial) is evaluating it as an important tool for message giving along with Hindi and English. Perhaps, this is the reason why he is consciously or unconsciously using Urdu as a code in TV commercials.

Secondly, Urdu like many living languages has been a virile, dynamic and creative language. With Indo-Aryan at its structural base, the language has shown full of adaptability and has accepted and absorbed linguistic elements from many languages like Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Hindi, English and so many other Indian languages. It has produced rich

literature. To quote Kushwant Singh (1982: 80) "no other Indian language in the sub-continent has produced so rich a literature in so short period of time". Notwithstanding all this in the current milieu of languages, prestige-wise we feel, it has suffered a setback. Its pre-eminence as an official and court language is a thing of past. Its base of primary education has greatly eroded. Official patronage coming its way seems to be less and less. Despite all this, attitudinally it is still perceived to be a "sweet" language. Many of acquaintances and friends of the present author with whom he has conversed, entertain such a feeling vis-à-vis Urdu. It must be noted that these people had nothing to do with Urdu. In the context of TV commercials, perhaps this view of the sweetness of a language is working sub-consciously in the mind of the advertisement writer. The latter views that blending linguistic elements from Urdu, a 'sweet language, would render the advertisement aesthetically charming. This would have a desired effect on the consumer.

The third factor for the preference of Urdu for being code-mixed is perhaps based on the stylistic principle of 'deviation from norm'. It is a literateur that generally uses this principle, inter alia, to make his or her literary writing look different vis-à-vis language compared to non-literary writings. It may be noted that he creates 'deviation from norm', using the same language which he is writing in. The whole idea behind such an exercise is to make the writing aesthetically more comely and charming- a charm which causes the reader linguistically stimulated and excited.

Be this as it may, the objective of an advertisement is to interact and lure the consumer. The writer of the advertisement then has to resort to some device which renders the language look pleasantly different compared to the ordinary speech. Therefore, he seeks to exploit the principle of 'deviation from norm' and uses it through in an ameliorated form. That is, by blending languages- those of which he thinks are effective tools for the purpose. Here again Urdu perhaps is perceived as a fit language to achieve the goal.

The fourth factor why Urdu is preferred in the context of advertisements perhaps pertains to the structural aspect. Urdu and Hindi are evolved from

Indo-Aryan stream and share almost the same structure. At literary level, though they tend to be different, at communicative level there is a great deal of fluidity. In other words, they readily yield for being blended with each other and yet do not look odd. Therefore the facility and ease which these languages offer for manoeuvrability is perhaps the reason why Urdu is preferred in the situation.

The last but not least factor has to do with the metrical (Ur. behr) and rhyming (Ur. qafia) system of Urdu poetry. Poetical elements such as metre, rhyme and other have been neatly and clearly defined in Urdu poetic system. The Urdu ghazal which follows these things faithfully has touched new heights of popularity. The meters of ghazal have been rendered into frames of Indian musical system. It has achieved the status of a genre in music. Apart from ghazal, concept of bahr, radif, qafiya seems to have been exploited and used in Hindi filmic songs too by the writers. All this has made the advertisement writer a passive recipient of these things. He has a very hazy concept of rhyme (qafiya) in his mind. At times he tries to use this in advertisement, through in a crude form. Consider the following:

1. evərəsṭməsalõ se bhojəntəyyar
   xubməzedar, xubzaIqedar

2. peʃhəinəyaheḍəṇḍsolḍərs
   dImaɤrəhegakul
   ḍæṇḍrəfjaogebhul

When we look through these advertisements and many more like these, it appears that the advertisement writer has a lurking desire to exploit the qafiya concept. Its application in crude form may be due to writer's half-baked knowledge of these things or he does not want to introduce hard literary concepts. May be, these things when introduced in their hard form, obscure the message and create hurdles in communication. So better to use qafiya concept in half-baked form and effect the flow of message easily. To achieve these objectives, the writer is bound to use Urdu as a code in advertisements.

In the above lines we have tried to look and probe into dynamics of the use of language in general and Urdu in special in TV commercials. May be, there are many more factors responsible for using Urdu as a code in mixing. Further investigation in this area may unravel many more things.

Conclusion

In the current age of information explosion and globalization the entity what we call language is passing through many trials and tribulations. Promotion of media and emergence of newer and newer channels of communication have opened up new vistas of experimentation with and probe into the entity of language. In the present paper, we have tried to look into one area, to be more specific, the TV commercials, those that are relayed from Delhi Doordarshan. In-spite of the fact that language-wise these have been classified as Hindi commercials, they freely make use of Urdu and English and blend the elements from these languages- a process what we technically call 'code-mixing' in socio-linguistics. From the discussion in the paper it follows that in a communicative strategy like advertising 'the purity of language' is not a sacrocent issue; rather messaging is a more crucial issue here. The advertisement writer therefore resorts to means and devices, whatever he thinks appropriate and conducive for messaging. Code-mixing is one of them.

Nextly in a code-mixing situation like advertisement, among other things, issues like communicative value, amenability for mixing, aesthetic richness of the codes that mix seem to assume greater importance compared to issues like prestige and bilinguality. In the present paper, we have tried to pinpoint a few such issues for Urdu being mixed as a code in TV commercials. It would be interesting to probe whether parallel situation exists with respect to advertising in other Indian languages or multilingual settings in other parts of the world. Analysing similar situations of code-mixing may enable us to know and establish the defining characteristics of the code-mixed language in a better way. Such studies may not only offer new dimensions to the study of code-mixing but will help us understand the inherent and universal properties of human languages. Therefore we may have a better view of the working of the human languages.

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Appendix

1. rəuʃni ka sərtaj	-	bəjaj
2. zaiqa əur tezi	-	vahtaj
3. tvaca kahəmraz	-	rəksona
4. ap ka ʃandar həmsəfər	-	bəjaj
5. lajəvab cae	-	gUɖrik
6. kamIyab jãbaz mərdõ ke liye	-	pamolIv
7. tez əsər	-	ənasin
8. xubsurət reʃəmi balõ ke liye	-	læksme
9. zaIqe dar kifayati cae	-	kəmla cae

10. mehki mehki tazgivala   -   pondzd rim flaər pəuḍər

11. əb peʃ kərtehə̃i, Istemal kijIye, azmaIe.

12. qudrəti tel   -   rekson aka raz

13. sənləiṭ ka zəbərdəst jhag

14. evərəsṭ məsalõ se bhojən təyyar, xub məzedar, xub zaIqedar

15. ek ənokha ehsas   -   pondzs abun

16. godrejstorvel   -   behtərinteknik

17. ale nərm-o-reʃəm ke bəṛhte karəvã mẽ   -   læksme

18. zəbərdəstj hag, kIfayati dhUlai, xas svad, komal ehsas, əflatun tazgi, sreʃṭa ka ehsas

19. salgIra parṭi sIlk saṛIyã

20. mahIko, hərd əm ek qədəm age

21. cəlta rəhe məcəltar əhe, cəlta rəhe məcəlta rəhe, ye dil məcəlta rəhe, bIna ruke məcəlta rəhe, kolgæṭ jel, sãsõ mẽ tazgi, cəlti rəheməcəltirəhe, cəlti rəhe məcəlti rəhe, məcəlti rəhe, kolgæṭ jel, sãsõ mẽ tazgi, cəlti rəhe

22. peʃ həi, nəya həḍ əṇḍ ʃolḍərs, dImaɤ rəhega kul, ḍæṇḍrəf jaogebhul, nəya həḍ əṇḍ ʃolḍərs, rIməmber, dImaɤ rəhega kul, ḍæṇḍrəf jaoge bhul

23. pepsoḍeṇṭ jermi cek, lakhõ kipəsənd, unhĩ ki zəbani

24. foṭo əisi bIlkul əslij əisi, ye kəmal sIrf ekkoḍak golḍ fIlm mẽ həi

25. vəhi pUrane nil ke dhəbbe, vəhi purani səfedi, kəb bədlega nil, kəb bədlegi tədbir, aya nəya Ujala car bundõ vala, kəpṛo ki məil kəṭ jae, səfedi ka nəya rəng lae, xuʃ hojao, məhine bhərki səfedI lao

26. məji ki təbiyət ṭhiknəhĩ, kəunsi dəva dũ? Un ki Umr mẽ səiḍ efekṭ ska dhyanrəkhna cahIe, krosin to hogi, krosin sIrfa ram hi nəhĩ, koməlta se aram

27. sərf æ̃gzel deta həikəṛi səfai, məgər pyar se

28. organIk, xubsurət balõ ke dil ki dhəṛkən

29. bluḍi se kəpṛe…ho…cəmmək cəmmək jaẽ bluḍi pəuḍər ke səŋg, ye ṭIkIya mUft paẽ

30. kəngræjul əns kUmar, aj ke dIn əisi ʃərṭ, əisi ʃərt, sadharəṇ səsti ṭIkIyakiədhurisəfaiziddiməilkamukabIlanəhĩ kərsəkti,… bədəl ḍalũgi mõi əpni ṭIkIya,… əbəpnaIye, aur ədhIk nimbu pəur vil, məil ko okhaṛ phẽk ekəpṛ erəkhesurəkʃIt, bedaɤ, vIʃvəsnIya nimbu pəurvil, məil pər səxt həmla, kəpṛõ ki sUrəkʃa.

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