**Research Paper**

# English-Hindi Code-Switching in Bollywood: A Comparison of Rap and Romantic Songs Using Linguistic Analysis

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***ABSTRACT:*** *This paper analyses the prevalence of English-Hindi code-switching in Bollywood rap and romantic songs using three levels of linguistic analysis, namely, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics. Through morphological and syntactical analysis, it concludes that English-Hindi code-switching is higher in rap songs than in romantic songs in Bollywood. Through pragmatic analysis, this paper explores why this is the case and concludes that rap songs are stand-alone songs with a higher need to be catchy as compared to romantic songs that focus more on emotional depth. This paper is the first to compare English-Hindi code-switching in Bollywood rap and romantic songs.*
***KEYWORDS:*** *Code-Switching, Intra-Lexical, Morphology, Syntax, Pragmatics*

## I. INTRODUCTION

I love listening to Bollywood songs across different genres. Bollywood refers to the Hindi film industry in India. I have observed that rap songs use much more English-Hindi code-switching on average than romantic songs in Bollywood. I was curious to understand if this observation is correct and, if so, what could be the reason why English-Hindi code-switching is more common in Bollywood rap than in romantic songs.

My initial hypothesis is that Bollywood rap songs use more code–switching than romantic songs. To assess my hypothesis, I will look at a select number of Bollywood rap and romantic songs from a linguistic perspective. I will focus on three levels of analysis, namely, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics. Morphology and syntax level of analysis will help me assess if my hypothesis that English-Hindi code-switching is more prevalent in rap songs than romantic songs in Bollywood is valid. Pragmatics analysis will help me understand why English-Hindi code-switching might be used.

This paper first provides a historical background on English-Hindi code-switching and its evolution in recent decades to better understand the central concept of the paper. This is followed by a description of the methodology of research and presentation of the primary data. After this, I will analyze the data in the context of my initial hypothesis before concluding by mentioning limitations and next steps for further research.

Code-switching, simply defined, is the use of the first language along with other languages or dialects in statements or conversations (Romaine, 1992 in Nilep, 2006). Khubchandani (1986) suggests that code-switching in Indian society is a consequence of the linguistic practices in the daily lives of Indians. He contends that code-switching is not merely a matter of convenience but rather serves as a nuanced expression of purpose within a discourse, demonstrating its high level of functionality.

The British colonialism of India led to a widespread use of English. However, Indians did not just adopt English, they adapted it to their social norms and culture. (The Tribune, 2004). One of the first known uses of Hinglish was in 1827 by India's first English poet, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, in his poem Ode—From The Persian Of Half' Queez, which states:

"Spicy scent, delusive joy;

Chillum hither lao, my boy!" (Mint, 2018)

In 1887, Ayodhya Prasad Khatri (1857-1905), a prominent Hindi poet, also used code-mixed sentences in a famous work. He said,

"Darkness chhaaya hua hai Hind men chaaro taraf

Naam ki bhi hai nahiin baaqi na light now-a-days." (Barnali, 2017)

Since the 20th century, code-mixing English and Hindi has become an integral part of communication in Indian society. British officials and their families who settled in India began using code-mixed sentences. Hence, code-mixing is indicative of natural cultural evolution.

Propelled by the advent of modern technology like mobile phones and the internet, code-mixing English with Hindi has become an indispensable component of the lingua franca for not only urban Indians but also those who live in rural areas. Code-mixing has become a vital part of Indian culture, from TV shows to advertisements and Bollywood movies to songs. Whether it is a famous movie like "Jab We Met" (When We Met) or the popular Airtel India campaign "Har Ek Friend Zaroori Hota Hai", code-mixing English with Hindi has become widely used across India (Barnali, 2017).

Code-mixing has led to the formation of new mixed words. Some examples include darofy ('dar' is a Hindi word for fear and 'fy' is an inflection in English), filmi ('film' is an English word for movie, and 'i' is a diacritic in Hindi), and uncleji ('uncle' is an English word and 'ji' is a suffix in Hindi added to show respect for an elder) (ABC News, 2017).

Code-mixed sentences often do not follow the defined grammatical rules of either language. An example would be, "Exam hai kal so need to study din bhar." The literal English translation is "Exam is tomorrow so need to study day long." The correct English sentence would be "I have an exam tomorrow so I need to study all day" and the grammatically correct Hindi sentence would be, "Kal mera exam hai isiliye mujhe din bhar padhna hoga."

## II. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, I will be looking at the transcripts of 12 Bollywood songs, 6 rap, and 6 romantic songs. In order to minimize variations due to time, all the songs chosen for the analysis were released in the past two decades. In addition, to minimize variations in the code-switching arising due to gender differences, I will focus only on male artists for this study as the Bollywood rap music genre is dominated by male artists.

The two rappers I will focus on are Yo Yo Honey Singh and Badshah. The Honey Singh songs I will examine are *Love Dose*, *Sunny Sunny*, and *Lungi Dance*, while the Badshah songs are *Saturday Saturday*, *Kar Gayi Chull*, and *The Breakup Song*. The two romantic singers I will focus on are Arijit Singh and Atif Aslam. The Arijit Singh songs I will evaluate are *Apna Bana Le*, *Kesariya*, and *Khairiyat* and the Atif Aslam songs are *Dil Daya Gallan*, *Main Rang Sharbaton*, and *Tera Hua*.

I first did a google research to find the top Bollywood rap and romantic song hits in the past two decades. I found that many of the hit songs were sung by these four artists in their respective genres. I then looked at the top 10 hit songs of each of these four artists and randomly selected three songs each to minimize sample selection bias.

I will look at intra-lexical words usage in the chosen songs for the morphology analysis. Intra-lexical code-mixing, simply defined, refers to mixing of languages within a single word. It occurs when a speaker combines two or more languages at the word level. For example, in the song *Kesariya*, "storiyaan" is used which combines English word "story" with the Hindi suffix "-aan" to make story plural.

There is a two-pronged analysis that I will do to understand the syntax linguistic analysis. First, I will examine the number of code-switched words in each song. For the purpose of this study, code-switched words refer to English words that have been put in the Hindi lyrics. For example, the lyric "Aa jao on the beach, yaar photo meri kheench" from the song *Sunny Sunny* has 2 English code-switched words, namely, beach and photo. Second, I will analyze the number of code-switched lyrics following Hindi grammar rules, the number of code-switched lyrics following English grammar rules, and the number of code-switched lyrics following neither Hindi nor English grammar rules.

For example, in *The Breakup Song*, the code-switched lyric "मुँह पे makeup कर लिया" follows the Hindi grammatical rules (subject-object-verb) for structure formation. In contrast, the lyric "Look, baby, मुझे लगता है कि जो भी तूने किया है वो very, very right है" from the same song follows the English grammatical structure where this lyric literally translates to "Look, baby, I feel that whatever you did is very very right." A line from the song Sunny Sunny "तेरा प्यार that's all I need O mere yaar" which literally translates to "Your love thats all I need O my friend" does not follow either of the language's grammatical rules. This second part of the syntactic analysis will also contribute to understanding why code-switching is used.

Lastly, I will look at the most frequent code-switched words in the songs and assess why the words were used, given the song's context for pragmatic analysis. This will help us understand the function of these code-switched words to analyze why English-Hindi code-switching is prevalent in songs.

### III.    DATA

| Song Title | Name of Singer | Genre | Total Words | Code-Switched Words | % of Code-Switched words | Intra-lexical words | % of Intra-lexical words |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lungi Dance | Yo Yo Honey Singh | Rap | 477 | 108 | 54.6 | 3 | 0.67 |
| Love Dose | Yo Yo Honey Singh | Rap | 371 | 44 | 11.86 | 0 | 0 |
| Sunny Sunny | Yo Yo Honey Singh | Rap | 352 | 87 | 24.72 | 2 | 0.57 |
| Saturday Saturday | Badshah | Rap | 232 | 61 | 26.29 | 4 | 1.73 |
| Kar Gayi Chull | Badshah | Rap | 219 | 27 | 12.33 | 0 | 0 |
| The Breakup Song | Badshah | Rap | 358 | 58 | 16.2 | 3 | 0.84 |
| Apna Bana Le | Arijit Singh | Romantic | 257 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kesariya | Arijit Singh | Romantic | 263 | 3 | 1.14 | 3 | 1.14 |
| Khairiyat | Arijit Singh | Romantic | 172 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dil Daya Gallan | Atif Aslam | Romantic | 223 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Main Rang Sharbaton | Atif Aslam | Romantic | 326 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tera Hua | Atif Aslam | Romantic | 129 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| Song Title | Name of Singer | Genre | Number of Code-Switched lyrics following Hindi grammar rules | Number of Code-Switched lyrics following English grammar rules | Number of Code-Switched lyrics neither following Hindi nor English grammatical rules |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lungi Dance | Yo Yo Honey Singh | Rap | 11 | 9 | 8 |
| Love Dose | Yo Yo Honey Singh | Rap | 23 | 0 | 0 |
| Sunny Sunny | Yo Yo Honey Singh | Rap | 14 | 10 | 3 |
| Saturday Saturday | Badshah | Rap | 7 | 2 | 40 |
| Kar Gayi Chull | Badshah | Rap | 8 | 0 | 17 |
| The Breakup Song | Badshah | Rap | 21 | 9 | 6 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Apna Bana Le | Arijit Singh | Romantic | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kesariya | Arijit Singh | Romantic | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Khairiyat | Arijit Singh | Romantic | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dil Daya Gallan | Atif Aslam | Romantic | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Main Rang Sharbaton | Atif Aslam | Romantic | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tera Hua | Atif Aslam | Romantic | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| Song Title | Name of Singer | Genre | Word | Number of occurrences | Function |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lungi Dance | Yo Yo Honey Singh | Rap | Rajini Fans | 7 | Address fans of the popular actor Rajnikant. |
| | | | Dance | 78 | Appeal to both urban and rural audiences in India, and make the song catchy. |
| | | | Don't miss the chance | 6 | Urging Rajini fans not to miss the opportunity to celebrate and enjoy the song and dance on it. |
| Love Dose | Yo Yo Honey Singh | Rap | Queen | 9 | Uses Queen which rhymes with the next line ending with "namkeen." Queen also symbolizes the exceptional elegance and beauty of the woman the singer is writing this song about. |
| | | | Love Dose | 2 | Signature phrase in the song which reinforces the central theme of the song and makes it more catchy. In addition, it also rhymes with the previous line which ends with "close." |
| Sunny Sunny | Yo Yo Honey Singh | Rap | Sunny | 36 | Adds a specific detail of the atmosphere to the lyrics, setting a lively mood. Also rhymes with the lyric above. |
| | | | Blue | 6 | Adds a visual detail of the color of water, makes the lyric more catchy. |
| | | | Beach | 6 | Provides the location and setting of the song. |
| Saturday Saturday | Badshah | Rap | Saturday | 48 | Serves as a temporal reference, emphasizing the specific day of the week. In India, most people party on Saturday and not Friday so it resonates with the young Indian crowds to make the song more catchy. |
| Kar Gayi Chull | Badshah | Rap | Beautiful | 13 | Appeals across different cultures in India. |
| | | | London | 3 | In India, London is perceived as a symbol of modernity and style. Adds a modern and trendy element to the lyrics. |
| The Breakup Song | Badshah | Rap | Breakup | 15 | Signature phrase in the song which reinforces the central theme of the song and makes it more catchy. |

## IV. ANALYSIS

Morphology

The first table provides information on the frequency of intra-lexical words in Bollywood rap and romantic songs. There are several interesting insights from this data from a morphological lens. The selected rap songs, on average, had a higher frequency of intra-lexical words than the romantic songs. However, the intra-lexical words as a percentage of the total number of words in the songs ranged from 0.57% to 1.73%. This percentage was lower than what I expected to be.

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It is interesting to note that most intra-lexical words in these songs combined an English word with the Hindi suffix "ji" which is added to show respect for the person you are referring to. For example, in the song *Saturday Saturday*, the singer uses intra-lexical words like "madamji" and "babyji" where madam and baby are English words followed by the Hindi suffix ji. This particular intra-lexical word structure is very commonly used these days in informal conversations among Hindi speakers, especially the younger generation. Hence, using such intra-lexical words appeals to the Gen-Z demographic and makes it more catchy and trendy.

Syntax

In the first table, several factors struck me as interesting from the syntax standpoint. Bollywood rap songs used a higher number of code-switched words than romantic songs. The highest percentage of code-switched words was used in the Lungi Dance, with the code-switched words constituting 54.6% of the total number of words in the lyrics. Interestingly, 5 out of 6 romantic songs did not have any code-switched words. Only one romantic song, Kesariya, had 1.14% of code-switched words but that was significantly lower than the 11.86% of code-switched words used in the song Love Dose which represented the lowest percentage of code-switching in any of the selected rap songs.

Within the rap songs as well, Yo Yo Honey Singh, on average, used a higher number of code-switched words than Badshah. Yo Yo Honey Singh is recognized in the Bollywood industry as making music focused more on the Gen Z demographic, while Badshah's music caters to the broader Indian population in general.

From the second table, we can see that rap songs have a significantly higher number of code-switched lyrics as compared to romantic songs. This is a logical consequence of the insights drawn from Table 1 which show that rap songs have a significantly higher number of code-switched words as compared to romantic songs. Out of the 6 rap songs, 4 of them have a higher number of code-switched lyrics following Hindi grammatical rules for sentence formation, while the rest 2 have a higher number of code-switched lyrics that follow neither Hindi nor English grammatical rules for sentence formation.

I argue that differences in the grammatical rules (or lack of) in code-switched lyrics are purely done to make the music flow smoothly, that is make the verses consistent. The primary goal of these intentional grammatical variations is to enhance the overall musical flow. By allowing flexibility in grammar, songwriters can create lyrics that seamlessly integrate with the rhythm and overall structure of the musical composition.

Pragmatics

The last table provides information on the function of the most frequent code-switched words in the context of the songs. In alignment with my initial hypothesis, most of the most commonly used code-switched words are used to make the songs more catchy. However, an additional level of insight emerged from this analysis: code-switched words frequently play a dual role, serving as both the song title and featuring prominently in the main chorus. This strategic usage aims to leverage their catchiness, intensifying their impact and solidifying their connection to the song's central theme.

Another interesting insight that came from this analysis is that code-switched words are often used for convenience; that is, they are used purely to maintain a consistent musical rhythm. For instance, in the song 'Love Dose,' there is a deliberate choice to code-switch from the Hindi word 'raani' to the English word 'queen.' This linguistic shift is strategically made to align with the subsequent lyric, 'namkeen,' signifying a snack in Hindi. Hence, I argue that perhaps intentional code-switching in many examples also serves an aesthetic purpose. It enhances the overall artistic appeal and rhythmic cohesion of the song.

## V. CONCLUSION

Bollywood rap songs, on average, have a higher prevalence of English-Hindi code-switching than romantic songs in the recent few decades. This is substantiated by morphological and syntactical analysis: rap songs use a significantly higher number of intra-lexical and code-switched words than romantic songs. In addition, a higher percentage of the lyrics of rap songs constitute code-switched words than romantic songs.

Rap songs employ varying grammatical rules, with some featuring more code-switched lyrics adhering to Hindi grammatical rules, others aligning more closely with English, and some deviating from both sets of rules. I argue that there is no fixed structure for determining the grammatical rules for code-mixed lyrics. The grammatical rules governing code-switched verses are determined solely by the need to uphold musical rhythm and consistency.

The pragmatic analysis shows that code-switching in rap songs primarily serves two main functions: making the song more catchy, and/or maintaining a consistent musical rhythm. I think that rap songs aim to be catchier for two reasons. First, rap songs often exist as stand-alone songs, outside the context of a movie plot or storyline, and hence need to be more catchy and appeal to a wider variety of audiences. This is due to the limited exposure of rap songs through movies that naturally reach a wider customer base. Romantic songs, on the other hand, are integral components of the storylines and complement the movie plot. Hence, they emphasize

emotional depth more than catchiness. Second, rap songs are more focused on the Gen Z demographic than romantic songs and, hence, use code-switching to align with the linguistic preferences of Gen Z.

There are, however, some limitations to my research. Firstly, I have exclusively examined male artists for the purposes of this study. Although male artists dominate Bollywood rap music, this focus does not offer a comprehensive view. Secondly, despite being randomly selected, the sample size for this research study is small, and it concentrates solely on songs from the past two decades. Consequently, it may not universally apply to all Bollywood rap and romantic songs.

While acknowledging these limitations, I argue that the study's focus on male artists in Bollywood rap music is justified by the dominance of male voices in this genre and provides a meaningful contribution to this area of research, given there is no existing literature comparing English-Hindi code-switching in Bollywood rap and romantic songs. Additionally, I decided to concentrate on the past two decades of Bollywood music to align with the contemporary trends and evolution of Bollywood music. Rap songs have become very popular in the Bollywood industry in the past few years and were not a very integral part of the Bollywood music industry till the early 21st century. Though the sample size is small, it was randomly selected, enhancing the study's internal validity.

There is a tremendous scope for future research. First, as mentioned in the limitations, there is potential research to be done about whether there is a similar trend observed in rap compared to romantic songs sung by female artists. Second, there is potential for in-depth analysis of English-Hindi code-switching in connection to other disciplines like sociolinguistics. Third, further research could be done to compare changes in the frequency of code-switching usage in Bollywood rap songs over time.

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