
Note-Taking Involving Native and Modern Languages: A Detailed Analysis of My Code-Meshing

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Produced in Kevin Roozen's Summer 2016 ENC 1101

In the present world, where there is so much exchange of information, people cannot remember everything heard in speeches, lectures, and conversations. The mind of the receiver cannot retain every piece of important information provided by the source with one hundred percent accuracy. This is common for everyone from a first grader to a professor with a doctorate degree. Even though the audience might be very keen observers, they might not remember what they hear over a considerable amount of time. So, there is a need to practice an activity to remember and keep track of the ideas projected by the speaker. People engage in a number of writing activities; however, from my personal experiences, I think that note-taking activities play a significant role in the retention of ideas in a systematic and efficient manner. Using multiple languages such as Hindi, Sanskrit, and English increases the speed of this activity and helps me retain knowledge of these languages for a long time. I mainly use Hindi to present my ideas briefly and Sanskrit to describe the actions of the subject. Suresh Canagarajah, in his chapter, "World Englishes as Code-Meshing," explains that code-meshing is a process of combining different languages to communicate an idea in a more efficient manner (273). When I do code-meshing, I use multiple languages because it helps me save time during note-taking, as well as retain knowledge about Hindi and Sanskrit languages. Code-meshing helps me communicate my ideas to myself in a concise manner, understand multiple features of how languages work together, and maintain relationships with other people who speak the same languages.

I started taking notes in classes when I was in the eleventh grade. In the beginning of the year, my friend, Vinay Gupta, helped me inculcate the habit of note-taking in class using English. He constantly reminded me of the importance of taking notes as a tool to focus in class and revise in the future for examinations. After regular reminders from him, I started getting habituated to this writing activity. I continue to use pencil and paper to note the ideas in class so that I can make necessary corrections in case of errors. I start my note-taking by writing a date on the left-hand side of the page. I generally take notes only in History, Politics, Geography, and other subjective classes because I cannot memorize the facts presented in these subjects. Since facts were not always explained with logic and theory, I forgot them as time passed. Therefore, using a note-taking strategy during the lectures helped me pay attention in classes as well as study for the examinations. My notes are concise and easy to review, so I did not have to read entire chapters in the textbook to prepare for the examination. On the other hand, writing notes in the class is challenging, as I have to write very fast in order to follow with the professor.

Although I wrote the notes in English from the beginning of the eleventh grade, I started incorporating two different languages into my note-taking as my friend, Neha Singh, advised me to

do so at the beginning of twelfth grade. Sanskrit is one of the most commonly used languages of India. I learned Sanskrit as my third language from fifth grade to eighth grade. The main reason for the inclusion of Sanskrit into my note-taking is my passion for becoming more proficient in using verbs in Sanskrit. In Sanskrit, there are about thirty different forms of words representing a particular verb, determined by the tense and the number of people involved in a particular action. Since learning all the verbs by just reading them from books and using them is a tedious process, I thought of including the verbs in my daily writing activities. As my note-taking activity does not require a second person reading my text, I could include Sanskrit in my writing. I made notes only for myself and made them in such a manner that only I could understand. This gave me the freedom to use any language that I wanted.

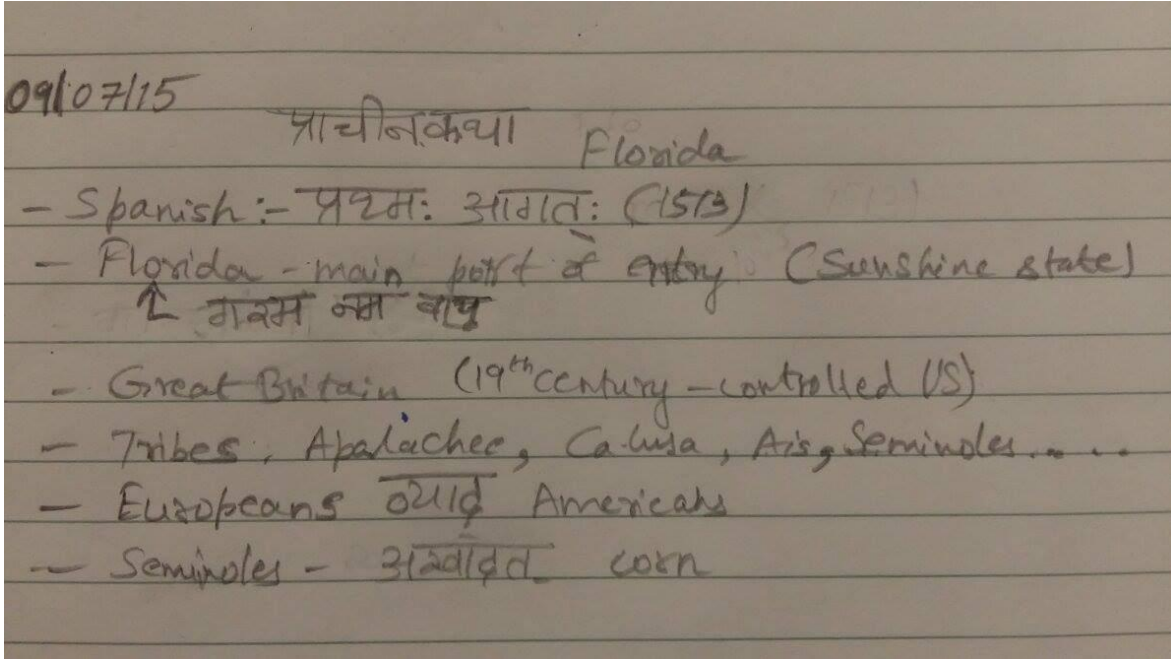


Figure 1: Sample of my note-taking activity taking during my Florida History class

Along with Sanskrit, I started using English and Hindi in my note-taking activity. I am proficient in English and Hindi as they were my first and second languages respectively in the curriculum followed by my school. So, I started learning these languages from second grade onwards. Among all languages, I use English more often as I am more skilled in this language over the others. My school emphasized learning English and this prompted me to learn English more effectively than any other language. I mainly use English for noting the nouns in the sentences as I was exposed to various different types of nouns from my childhood. Hindi is one language that, used at appropriate places, conveys a large meaning in short phrases or words. I use Hindi in certain places as it uses a limited number of words to convey a greater number of ideas. The note-taking writing activity including code-meshing is so efficient that I still continue to do this even in my present classes. For example, the figure above illustrates my note-taking activity in my Florida History class. This was one of the classes that I was enrolled in during my first semester as a freshman at the University of Central Florida. I felt that this class included a lot of facts that could not be learned through a reasoning approach. So, I extensively used note-taking in this class to successfully gain knowledge about the history of Florida.

The title of my note-taking activity involves two different languages—Hindi and English. The first word depicts that this chapter is a concise history. Then I included “Florida” in English that shows the main subject of discussion. In total, the title implies that this is a chapter that provides a

brief historical description of Florida. Under the title, I stated two Sanskrit words that mean “first came” and a single English word that states the main subject of discussion in the point—Spanish. In the second point, I used English to describe that Florida, also known as the Sunshine State, is the main port of entry for the invaders. In this sentence, I lacked the knowledge of conversion of verbs into Sanskrit. Also, I could not find a way to shorten this sentence by conversion into Hindi. In the sentence below, I used Hindi words that mean that the weather is generally very hot and the air contains a lot of water vapor. This results in a hot and humid climate. I used an arrow to connect the details to the subject. In total, the two sentences describe the weather of Florida and the importance of Florida for the United States. The next two sentences are in English, as they are comprised of nouns which include the names of tribes and which country ruled the United States at a particular time. So, I could not write them in any language other than English. The dots after the word “Seminole” indicate that there were various other tribes pertaining to the same locality, but the ones listed are the most significant ones. However, the fifth point in the figure states a Hindi word meaning there was a significant transfer of infectious diseases. So, the fifth point states that with the invasion of Europeans into the United States, infectious diseases were transferred to the Americans on a large scale. In the last sentence, the Sanskrit word represents that something was eaten in large quantities. When I combine the English words with the Sanskrit word in the sentence, I understand that corn was a major part of the diet of Seminole community. Therefore, I understand that code-meshing helps me save time during note-taking and also helps me retain knowledge about Hindi and Sanskrit languages.

Code-meshing directly influences me and indirectly plays an important role in my social life. Using two languages apart from English in my daily life that are related to my home country, India, helps me remember these languages in a more apt manner. Also, I gain more fluency in these languages, which supports me better during communication in these languages. For example, I always have a conversation in Hindi with most of my friends in India as they speak this language. If I did not code-mesh different languages in my writing, I would gradually lose command over the languages and might not be able to make proper conversation with friends. Eventually, this might also create rifts in friendship due to lack of proper conversation with them. Also, having a conversation in another language would not allow me to share my emotions comfortably. So, I think code-meshing different languages helps me retain the knowledge about various languages that I learned in my home country before high school. Also, I can continue to speak to my parents in Hindi, which is given primary importance in my family. So code-meshing enables me to communicate and think in Hindi. As a result, I can continue communicating fluently in the language that has been given high importance in my family for generations.

Apart from retaining knowledge about languages, I save a lot of time by using a code-meshing process while taking notes in the classes. This writing activity helped me as it made my work easier and faster. For example, in the image of my note-taking for my Florida History class, I included three Hindi words below the second point that explained the weather conditions as hot and moist air. However, if I would have written in English then I would have written, “Weather – Very hot, air consists of the intense amount of water vapor.” This shows that using code-meshing helps to reduce the word count that results in less time taken to complete my note-taking. On the other hand, some people feel that using code-meshing requires more effort and consumes more time. In “From Journals to Journalism: Tracing Trajectories of Literate Development” by Kevin Roozen, Angelica Herrera explains how code-meshing makes her put more effort into her writing. She states, “It took me a long time to come up with it” (Roozen 557). This was her reaction when she got a comment on her essay that was submitted in her English 100 class. While trying to

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incorporate her voice in her writing, she took a huge amount of time to produce creative opening sentences in her first paper. This shows that different methods of code-meshing take different amounts of time to complete.

Besides serving as a force in my world, integrating code-meshing into my note-taking has helped me realize the important features of using languages. Like Suresh Canagarajah, who asserted, “The languages of multilinguals are not necessarily at war with one another; they complement one another in communication” (274), I learned from my writing activity how languages are dependent on each other to convey the main idea clearly. In the example I provided about note-taking, the words in Hindi and Sanskrit provide specific details for the words in English that helped me understand the main idea of the sentences in an intelligible manner. The absence of any one of the languages in my writing activity would have created difficulty for me in understanding precisely about Florida and its history. Contrary to my experience, Angelica faced a situation where she was told that her mixtures of codes did not work really well. In the English 100 class, the professor did not value the Spanish method of writing descriptive introductions in the assignments. In addition, the professor was inclined towards writing specifically about the topic rather than providing an imaginary description in the beginning of the essay.

Another crucial feature I learned about language is that multiple languages cannot be used in public writings. In my method of code-meshing, I cannot employ languages such as Hindi and Sanskrit in my examinations and other assignments that require submission to professors. The main reason is because English is the primary language that is highly valued by the educational system in my school. So, my strategy of code-meshing is limited to private forms of writing in which a second person is not involved in reading the way I code-mesh. My situation is profoundly different from the situation encountered by Angelica in her Journalism 150 class. In Angelica’s method of code-meshing, she was successfully accepted by her professor. In his analysis, Roozen writes, “The instructor recognized this paper as a successful performance, praising Angelica for the drama she created in the closing portion” (560). The instructor not only found that Angelica’s strategy was valuable, but encouraged her to continue this method.

Therefore, code-meshing helps in learning different aspects of languages. In general, code-meshing is a term that is not commonly known by a lot of people around the world. In fact, many people use code-meshing in their daily lives without the knowledge of it. Each person code-meshes in different techniques to achieve certain objectives. Some methods of code-meshing are more efficient than others in conveying the main idea. So, people should choose whatever method they intend to apply in an activity to achieve success. They might face difficulties during the application of code-meshing strategies; however, they should have determination and confidence when completing that activity.

Works Cited

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Volunteer UCF (VUCF) and loves volunteering for the needy. He also enjoys watching cartoons and reading comic books. Although he was not interested in writing, his Composition I class ignited the interest for writing inside him. Now, he has developed an interest in reading research articles and documentaries related to various fields of study.