A critique of *Sea of Poppies* in the light of Hoffmann's types of code-switching

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Abstract: This research seeks to analyse Amitav Gosh's novel *Sea of Poppies* in order to explore the sociolinguistic strategy of code-switching with respect to its various types. The term 'code-switching' denotes the connection of elements from multilingual interaction. This phenomenon has been approached by various sociolinguists, linguists, anthropologists and sociologists. It refers to mixing between various languages to a certain extent that confuses the traditional sociolinguistic conventions. The study also focuses on the close ties between various languages and their strong impact on structure of Standard English as manifested in the selected text. The research is qualitative and descriptive, and the data has been taken from the textual conversations and dialogues of various characters of the novel. It attempts to classify code-switching into its different types exemplified by the selected data. This research attempts to highlight the variety of English language used in the literary milieu of contemporary India. It explores the text through application of Charlotte Hoffmann's theory proposed in her 1991 book *An Introduction to Bilingualism*. Moreover, content analysis as a research method is used to trace the presence of code-switching in certain words, dialogues and conversations between the characters. It finds out the distinct varieties of English (Pakistani and Indian) as mininarratives against the single Standard English in order to explore that English Indian fiction writers use native words in their work/novels to describe local lifestyles, culture, food, relationships, and religion.

INTRODUCTION
The linguistic phenomenon of code-switching is multidimensional that has been studied from various perspectives in terms of the unconventional transformation of a language/code. In linguistics, the

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term 'code' has been taken from information theory, as Alvarez-Caccamo briefly explains:

> In information theory, a code is a mechanism to pair two sets of signals in non-ambiguous, reversible, and context-free ways. ...Inferential views of communication propose that most understanding depends on the particulars of the relationship between literal contents and contexts ...this has led to a disabling of the applicability of the 'code model' to human communication (cited in Lin 2008, 2).

The studies have explored code-switching not only giving an experimental touch to the language but also connecting a language with different social practices and communicative strategies. "Code-switching refers to a range of linguistic phenomena in which the speaker alternates elements from different languages or language varieties" (Li 2015). A code indicates a style or a language and the term 'code-switching' stands for the flexible shift from one language to another. Suzanne Romaine (1995, 33) mentions, "I will use the term 'code' here in a general sense to refer not only to different languages, but also to varieties of the same language as well as styles within a language". The phenomenon of code-switching is common in multilingual contexts; according to Hudson, "It is a situation where a speaker changes from one language code to another in a speech event" (cited in Ibhawaegbele and Justina 2012, 13). Similarly, Gumperz considers that it is "the juxtaposition of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems, within the same exchange" (cited in Al-Rowais 2012, 13). E. G. Bokamba defines the term:

> Code-switching is the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event… code-mixing is the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes), phrases and clauses from a cooperative activity where the participants, in order to infer what is intended, must reconcile what they hear with what they understand (Bokamba 1989, 281).

ENGLISH INDIAN FICTION

In subcontinent, English language came due to European colonizers who ruled the land and people for almost two hundred years. In fact, English language gained its superior position in the aftermath of colonialism around twentieth century as David Crystal (2012, 8) states,

"British political imperialism had sent English around the globe, during the nineteenth century, so that it was a language 'on which the sun never sets'".

As a result of the interaction of the British with the natives, many native words were mixed with English language that later got their entry in English language. Kellman (2003, 17) quotes Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine, asserting that: "Each language is a living museum, a monument to every culture it has been vehicle, too". Similarly, the contemporary Indian English fiction transforms English language through code-mixing and code-switching between various languages. Amitav Gosh is one of the renowned Indian English fiction writers, and his 2008 novel *Sea of Poppies* is the first of the *Ibis Trilogy* that was shortlisted for the prestigious Man Booker Prize in 2008.

The research question of this study is the following: What are the types of code-switching in *Sea of Poppies* that represent local culture and contextual sensibilities through the analysis of the conversation that happens between various characters'?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The investigation of code-switching started with John J. Gumperz who did his pioneering study on code-switching with respect to Hindi regional and standard dialects. He comments, "Most male residents, especially those who travel considerably, speak both the village and regional dialect. The former is used at home and with other local residents; the latter is employed with people from the outside" (Gumperz 1958, 669). An influential book, *Languages in Contact*, has already been published by Uriel Weinreich in 1953; inspired by this, Hans Vogt stressed that "Code-switching in itself is perhaps not a linguistic phenomenon but rather a psychological one and its causes are obviously extra-linguistic. But bilingualism is of great interest to the linguist because it is the condition of what has been called interference between languages" (Vogt 1954, 368).

It is also emphasized that the readers and users of English employ their contextual dimension; the ways of reading are various kinds of comprehension, which consists "not just of passive assimilation but of active engagement in inference and problem-solving", and the meanings are ascribed to texts "on the basis of interaction between what we might call textual and contextual material" implying differences of "background, social knowledge, belief and attitude"

(Montgomery et al. 2007, 8). Many factors (individuality, historical time, place, etc.) play an important function for the interpretation of diverse manners of reading; and of writing, too. Commenting on the localization of English, for example, Raja Ram Mehrotra states:

> Indian English has now come to be recognized as a viable, vigorous, and "self-generating" vehicle for the expression of Indian sensibility in literature. The Indianness of Indian literature in English lies in the typically Indian slant, colour and flavour of the subject matter and setting, on the one hand; and the words and phrases, sentences and proverbs, images and metaphors, rhythm and tone, patterns of naming and terms of kinship, modes of address and terms of endearment, on the other. (Mehrotra 1987, 103)

The contemporary Indian English novels attempt to challenge the established hegemony of Standard English Language as Crowley defines, "The concept of the standard spoken language can be seen as functionally equivalent to the Hellenic language, the central, 'correct' and 'pure' language spoken by the best speakers" (Crowley 2003, 183). Similarly Amitav Ghosh, being an anthropologist, writer, and an academician, focuses on the diversity and rich cultural heritage of India. "In *Sea of Poppies*, language importantly serves both as an index of the cross-cultural fusion that was operating in the Indian Ocean, and Bay of Bengal, and also as a trope for the emergence of new identities in the Ibis trilogy" (Luo 2013, 377). Ghosh's use of localized English can be referred to Salman Rushdie's idea that he pens down in his essay titled "'Commonwealth Literature' Does Not Exist". He favours the transformation of Standard English by stating, "The English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago" (Rushdie 1991, 70). Authors observe that "Ghosh is very careful in his use of English and develops a conscious and rich tradition in Indian English fiction" (Khair, Ed., 2005, 108). Ghosh's strategy of code-switching also resists the strong colonial hold of English language as Illaiah (cited by Prasad 2011, 3) states, "A language gets introduced in a particular historical context and it shall grow only if the socio-economic conditions for its growth are conducive. English has grown like that in India."

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The present study is a qualitative research. Hoffmann's typology has been taken as the conceptual framework in order to explore code-

switching in the selected text, *Sea of Poppies* by Amitav Ghosh. According to Hoffmann, "Language is the most powerful means of expressing separateness. National identity as well as self-identity can be very strongly rooted in the maintenance of a particular language." (Hoffmann 1991, 73) There are different types of code-switching: inter-sentential, intra-sentential, tag-switching, etc. Inter-sentential code-switching involves the switching between the sentences, a common expression in bilingual speakers. In intra-sentential code-switching, the switch occurs in the middle of a sentence, and it indicates no pauses, hesitations or interruptions. It usually happens naturally without the intention of the speaker, and it may occur within a single phrase or a sentence. At other times, code-switching happens unconsciously, when a speaker forgets a specific term, but he recalls it in another language. The third type of code is when the mix occurs in the same word boundary, e.g. Booken (plural of book in Urdu). The fourth type of code-switching occurs when a speaker shows continuity with the other speaker; for example:

> Speaker A: It is difficult. Mujh se nhe hoga. / I can't do.
> Speaker B: Tum se nhe hoga. / You can't do. But you can try.

Emblematic code-switching is fifth type that occurs when certain phrases or tags spoken in one language are inserted in one sentence of other language. It is same, as tag-switching mixes one language with other entirely different language. The last type of code-switching occurs when pronunciation changes against the conventions of phonology. Example: Modern vs M-aa-dran (Urdu pronunciation).

Our study uses content analysis as a research method, in terms of Lawrence Neuman:

> Content analysis is a technique for gathering and analyzing the content of text. Content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated. The text is anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication. (Neuman 2000, 322-323)

The present research significantly traces the conversations between various characters, and it also analyses units in the form of clauses, phrases and words. Data examine the types of code-switching present in *Sea of Poppies* that generalizes the common occurrence of this phenomenon in a bi/multilingual society.

CONTENT ANALYSIS AND DISCUSION
Sea of Poppies is the first novel of "Ibis Trilogy" by Amitav Ghosh, about the First Opium War and the slave trade. The major characters include Deeti, a widow and later the wife of an ordinary untouchable; Zachary Reid, an American sailor; Neel Rattan, an Indian landlord; and Benjamin Burnham, an opium businessman. The story of the novel begins on the eve of First Opium War along the banks of the holy river Ganges in Calcutta. The novel offers multiple perspectives, such as politics, history, myth, poetry and religion.

   Sea of Poppies comprises three sections: *Land*, *River,* and *Sea*. The first part, *Land,* introduces the characters who join the historical ship called Ibis. *River* is about the owner and his friends, while the last section, *Sea*, narrates the story of labourers and their voyage towards Calcutta. The characters belong to various segments of society such as sailors, coolies, convicts, high-class landlords, factory workers, English and French men and women. Therefore, the language used by them is a mixture of different local terms, words, phrases, puns, and jargons.

   Here is a detailed analysis of the transformation of Standard English Language and the presence of code-switching in the novel.

   Content analysis reveals *intra-sentential* code-switching that is reflected in the conversation between different characters. For instance, Neel speaks not only Standard English but also other local languages. At times, he speaks like a native speaker of Bhojpuri or Bengali (whenever he is in contact with local people). He asks his servant Parimal, 'Yeh kya bat hai?' / What is this? (Ghosh 2008, 168), and immediately he switches his language to formal English when he talks to the English police officer: 'Ah, Major Hall! What can I do for you?' (Ibid, 170) Here Amitav Ghosh emphasizes his idea that it is difficult to translate the full spirit of a culture in a different/outside language, therefore, the Standard English has to be transformed into localized version. He uses different code-switched words, which normally do have alternative equivalent words in the host language but his own familiarity with the indigenous culture compels him to use indigenous expression. He incorporates various native words and local expressions along with their translation or without any literal interpretation. 'Bindi', 'cha'ala', 'achol', 'mohona', 'chai', 'bokachoda', 'puja', 'gamchcha', 'daa', 'jhi', 'faqir', 'nomoshkar', 'tej', 'jhola', 'nouko', 'danob', 'matal' and 'tufaan' are some of the words which are used without any translation.

In other examples like "Kapra utaro. . . take off his clothes", and "These brooms are called "jhatas" or "jharus" (Ibid, 301; 314) carry literal translation. Ghosh provokes his readers to figure out the meanings of local words by sensing the context in which they are spoken or written. Similarly, some of the local words used for Indian religion and spiritualism are 'gurus,' 'tikki', 'tols', 'ashrams, 'pathshalas', 'sadhus', 'brahmachari' and 'rishis'. Bhojpuri words for edible items include 'roti,' 'achar,' 'dal,' 'dalpuri,' 'kichri' and 'pakora.' Like religious words, the novel also portrays words for local Indian dressing: "She rose early and went through the motions of her daily routine, laying out a freshly-washed dhoti and kameez for Hukam Singh" (Ibid, 3). Some other such kind of words include 'kameez' (shirt), 'ghungta' (veil), 'choli' (skirt), 'dupatta' (scarf), 'sari' (traditional long dress), langot (lower dress for male), lungi' (traditional dress) and 'kurta' (shirt).

The novel demonstrates that the characters, during their conversation, switch from one language to other – *inter-sentential* code: Deeti says to Kalua, "It was myself I saved today, he said in a whisper. Because if you have died, I couldn't have lived; jinda na rah sakela" (Ibid, 179). They use words, sentences or phrases from their own local language; and Ghosh translates these words into English in order to facilitate the international readers. Deeti, a widow, is threatened by her late husband's brother that she will be burnt alive as 'satti' (a cultural practice) but she faces him bravely and replies in Bengali and Bhojpuri languages, "Dikhatwa! We will see, she said" (Ibid, 156).

Other examples are: "Sab hazir hai! All present"; "Mareech-dip but she had never heard it used before, where is that? The Mauritius Islands, they call in English"; "Tera nam kya? What's your name?"; "Kya afat – what a calamity!"; 'Will you bring me bangles? Hamere khatir churi leliya?"; "A stick man – a dandi wala"; "Deeti would say Suraj dikhat awe to rasta mil jawe – when the sun rises the path will show itself" (Ibid, 420; 144; 149; 235; 206; 194; 214).

Ghosh uses code-switching in order to show the relevance with that of a specific context, such as, the instance when low class police soldiers ask Neel to open his mouth in a mixed language, " he turned to the sepoys who had led him in, and said, in rough Hindusthani: Mooh khol."(Ibid, 300)

The content analysis traces *intra-lexical* and *inter-lexical* borrowing, such as in a moment occurring during the conversation of

Mrs. Burnham with Paulette, "Mrs. Burnham: "Where have you been *chupowing* yourself? I've been looking everywhere for you" (Ibid, 203). Here, the word "chupowing" is derivative of Hindi verb "chupana" that means "to hide" (English). At another instance, Mr. Doughty says, "The trouble, you know, is that Johnny Chinaman thinks he can return to the good old days before he got his taste for opium. But there's no going back – just won't hoga" (Ibid, 112). In this line, it can be seen that there is a fusion of both English and Urdu as 'won't' and 'hoga' / happen, and such experimentation celebrates both the languages. There is also a list of other such words used in the text that have roots in Bengali, Bhojpuri or Hindi, as "Pollock-sawg" / "paalak-saag in Hindi", meaning a spinach dish, "hurremzads" / "bastards", "drinki", "oolter-poolter" / "upside down", "dufter" / "office", "Jel-khana", "darogas", "Dhoti-clad", etc. Some other such examples are: "Jharus made from palm leaf bristles"; "People were shouting 'Holi hai!'"; "This is the only part of you that's going to be up on that mast, with the laddu in your scuppers"; "You, ullu"; "Gomsuta left for the daftar"; "Lascars call that lofty chair a kursi"; "Has he been given the kubber that my bunder-boat has lagowed?" (Ibid, 210; 161; 200; 397; 173; 197; 25)

Emblematic examples are: "You sly little shaytan!"; "What happened-ji"; "Soor-ka-batcha' son of a pig"; "Trafficking in opium has been illegal there for some time. But they've never made a tumasher" (Urdu word tamasha / drama with addition of 'er') about it in the past. … The only reason they're making a fuss now is that they want a bigger share of the profits" (Ibid, 210; 163; 239; 113).

The presence of certain grammatical, lexical or phonetic deviations from Standard English language indicates that language is not only possessed by natives, rather other non-English users also take the liberty to appropriate or innovate it. Here are a few sentences taken from the conversations between different characters showing that the text doesn't follow the sequence of a proper verb, subject and grammar: "I go to school still and are still in the sixth standard. … "Zikri drinki / drinks milk in the ship?"; "No one had noticed the Kaptan coming on deck"; "Also he asks: hab / has Malum ever change colour? He too muchi foolo / much fool"; "What're you lookin / looking at?" (Ibid, 160; 240; 160; 153)

There are few characters in the novel who transform Standard English, for professional reasons, in order to make non-native

characters to understand their communication. Zachary is such a character who learns local Indian Ship terminology:

> Once under sail, Zachary was forced to undergo yet another education, […] he had to learn to 'resum' instead of 'rations', and he had to wrap his tongue around words like 'dal', 'masala' and 'achar'. He had to get used to 'malum' instead of mate, 'serang' for bo'sun, 'tindal' for bosun's mate, and 'seacunny' for helmsman; he had to memorize a new shipboard vocabulary, which sounded a bit like English and yet not: the rigging became the 'ringeen', 'avast!' was 'bas!', and the cry of the middle morning watch went from 'all's well' to 'alzbel'. The deck now became the 'tootuk' while the masts were 'dols'; a command became a 'hookum' and instead of starboard and larboard, fore and aft, he had to say 'jamna' and 'dawa', 'agil' and 'peechil' (Ibid, 15-16).

From well spoken English of white man, broken jargons of Queen, the rough language of Jodu (the lascar) and a hybrid language by Paulette, Ghosh creates a linguistic pluralism from diversified backgrounds. The setting of novel sets the context for transformation of Standard English as B.K. Sharma asserts: "Both Calcutta and Ibis are polyglot communities, where people speak pidgin, Bhojpuri and mangled English Bengali. Language works here as a major technique to unite, divide, confuse or clarify situation" (Sharma 2011, 597-598). Similarly, Mr. Lambert, Paulette's father, due to his love for the place, was settled in India and he speaks in localized English. A character of the novel, Baboo Nob Kissin, comments, "Lambert-sahib is always discussing with me in Bangla, but I am always replying in chaste English" (Ghosh 2008, 136). Lambert's daughter, Paulette, is taken care by a Bengali female servant and "the first language she learnt was Bengali" (Ibid, 67). On the other hand, some characters learn English as "Neel's schooling in English had been at once (so) thorough and (so) heavily weighted towards the study of texts" (Ibid, 237). According to Vedita Cowaloosur, "Ghosh's novels manipulate language to wield it as an index and reflection of the power equations between nations, whose relations have evolved with changing global politics" (Cowaloosur 2015, 1-13). The content analysis demonstrates that Ghosh's use of language represents different cultures, such as when the labourers are taken to Mauritis; they become confused and they ask: "Are we being fattened for the slaughter, like goats before Id?" (Ghosh 2008, 215) The word 'Id' (Eid) stands for a holy ritual of

Muslims when they sacrifice an animal (goat, cow, and camel) for the sake of ALLAH's willingness.

CONCLUSION

The content analysis of *Sea of Poppies* highlighted that the strategy of code switching is thoroughly incorporated by Amitav Gosh. His use of different types of code-switching engages the reader to participate in the reading process and to search for the connotative meanings besides the literal ones. These words also represent different cultures, religions and social contexts of the characters. We conclude that this stylistic technique to employ various languages in communication through code-switching determines the control of the choice of speaker's language and identity. The contemporary South Asian English literature is a fine example of the use of code-switching as a tool to construct, deconstruct or control the identity/s, and this aspect needs to be explored by upcoming research.

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