

Students' Strategic Reactions to the Role of Native Language as a Medium of Instruction in English Classrooms

Soheila Kabiri Samani

Department of Foreign Languages, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran

Mehry Haddad Narafshan

Department of Foreign Languages, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran

Abstract—Code-switching is the use of two languages simultaneously or interchangeably and is commonly seen with hesitation in foreign language learning classes. Hence, second or foreign language teachers and researchers have been concerned in decreasing the level of code-switching in the EFL classes. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching. In order to conduct the study, the quantitative research method was used. The data was collected from a sample of 219 students (male and female, with different age level) who were selected randomly for the purpose of the study. Through a questionnaire, the students' attitude was investigated. The results revealed that students held a positive attitude towards teacher's code-switching. More than half of the students believed teachers had better code-switching to enhance students' understanding. In addition, they believed that code-switching was more useful to teach grammar and writing skills as compared with teaching speaking skill.

Index Terms—code-switching, EFL classrooms, instruction, students' attitude

I. INTRODUCTION

Most of the time teachers and students switch to first language (L1) in the EFL classes, and code-switching as one of the unavoidable consequences of EFL classes has long existed. Therefore, it is necessary to see what students' attitude towards code-switching is.

Learning a second language is a long and complex undertaking (Brown, 2000). There are a lot of factors which affect teacher's decision in using L1 or L2 in teaching. For instance, it is often reported that the choice of which language to be used in the classroom by teachers depends on their views about teaching and their L2 proficiency (Franklin, 1990; Harbord, 1992; Macaro, 1997). When L2 learners use L1, it helps them to “create a social and cognitive space where they can work effectively to enhance their learning” (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998, p. 335). In addition, L2 input becomes more salient for learners through using of L1 resulting in enhancing enhancing intake (Van Lier, 1995). In Iran, EFL classes are sometimes taught in Farsi and teachers use code-switching during teaching English. There have been various definitions of the term “code-switching”. According to Lightbown (2001), code-switching is “the systematic alternating use of two languages or language varieties within a single conversation or utterance” (p.598). Poplack (1980) also had the same definition as Lightbown. He stated that code-switching sometimes called “code-mixing”, “code-changing”, or “code-shifting” is the act of alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent.

Code-switching occurs when a speaker switches his/her speech from one language to another language. The change happens when a speaker uses a language in a conversation while the other speaker replies in another language, or an individual speaks in one language, then in the middle of his/her speech, changes it to another language (Richard & Schmit, 2002). Eliss (1984), Fillmore (1985), Chaudron (1988), and Lightbown (2001) who are specialized in second language acquisition and favor intralingual teaching strategy believed that exposure to the target language (L2) can help learners to achieve success and state that teachers are responsible for creating a pure foreign language environment. They stated that using code-switching would lead to negative transfer in learning a foreign language. Levine (2003) and Chen (2008) as advocates of cross lingual (code-switching) teaching strategy believed that L1 is a good strategy of efficiency in foreign language teaching. Code-switching helps the senders transfer the information to the receivers effectively (Skiaba, 1997).

In EFL classrooms, both teachers and students use code-switching in their discourse. Although the use of code-switching is not supported by many educators, Sert (2005) asserts that understanding the functions of switching between the native language and the foreign language and its main reasons is essential.

Many researches have investigated teachers' beliefs on using first language, but the issue which has drawn the attention of many researchers in the field of second language teaching and second language learning for the past few decades are its functions and distribution in interaction rather than the effects of code-switching on aspects of learning (Rahimi Esfahani & Kiyomarsi, 2010).

Some teachers use code-switching as a strategy in EFL classes while others do not. So, it is urgent to see what learners' attitude towards code-switching is. Is it a facilitating factor or a debilitating one? Teachers do not know how to behave in EFL classes, use just L2 or a mixture of L1 and L2. Which one will motivate students more? And if code-switching does indeed occur, what are Iranian teachers' common code-switching practices? And what purposes and functions do teachers use code-switching for? Thus, the present study aims at investigating EFL students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching to find out why teachers use code-switching in EFL classrooms.

Research questions

The present study aims to investigate the following questions:

- 1) What is EFL students' attitude towards teacher's code-switching in EFL classrooms?
- 2) What is EFL students' attitude towards the factors that cause teacher's code-switching in EFL classrooms?
- 3) What is EFL students' attitude towards teacher's code-switching to teach English language skills in EFL classrooms?

Theoretical framework

There are various views about teacher code-switching which are summarized in Macaro's three designations of the L1 exclusion debate, categorized as "virtually all", "maximal", and "optimal" perspectives. Also the model does not include all arguments, it covers the basic claims in the debate of teacher language choices and in L2 classroom' alternations. The 'virtually all' argument holds that L1 does not have any value and must be avoided in all conditions. Likewise, the "maximal" perspective does not accept the role of L1. However, its view is less extreme than the view of "virtually all". The 'maximalists' view holds that we should avoid using L1, but as the ideal classroom condition does not exist using L2 is inevitable when it is necessary. Finally based on the "optimal view", using L1 has a pedagogical value and we should accept its role (Macaro, 1997). This study follows the optimal view of Macaro (1997).

Typological framework

There have been many attempts to provide a typological framework for code-switching. The researcher adopted Hymes (1962)'s framework, which included five basic functions of code-switching/mixing. **Expressive function:** the teacher uses code-switching to express emotions and true feelings. **Directive functions:** generally speaking, this function is used in a situation where a speaker wants to direct someone. This function can get the listeners' attention. **Metalinguistic functions:** It includes three functions: a) the definition of terms, b) paraphrasing others' words, and c) metaphors. **Poetic functions:** During the conversation, the speaker inserts some jokes, stories, and poetic quotations into an English-based conversation. It occurs while teaching in cases the teacher cannot find any related examples. **Referential functions:** According to Chen (2003), referential function has three categories: 1) terms that are not readily available in the other languages, 2) Terms that lack semantically appropriate words in other languages, and 3) Terms with which the speakers are more familiar in L1 than L2.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Definition of Code-Switching

Code-switching refers to the communicative exchange of two language codes by people who contribute to such particular codes. Code-switching is manifested in this exchange by a number of social and linguistic factors. Skiba (1997) asserts that code-switching involves 84 percent single word switches in the natural conversations of two bilinguals including 10 percent phrase switches, and 6 percent clause switching. Code-switching is seen as the alternation between two codes, either languages or dialects, among people sharing some specific codes. Redound (2005) states that code-switching's earliest definition dates back to Weinreich in 1953 who defined bilingual individuals as persons who switch from a language to another based on proper changes in speech situation. A number of social and linguistic factors affect the way Code-switching manifests itself which is quite normal in multicultural and immigrant populations.

Code-switching vs. code-mixing

Code-switching is different from the other language contact phenomena including borrowing, pidgins and creoles, loan translation, and language transfer. Borrowing influences lexicon, the constructing words of a language. However, code-switching occurs in in people's utterances (Gumperz, 1982; Poplack & Sankoff, 1984; Muysken, 2002). When some speakers who do not speak a common language form an intermediate, third language, they actually form and establish a pidgin language. However, speakers use code-switching when they have the required skill to use both languages. Code mixing is a thematically parallel term while the terms code-switching and code-mixing are used variously. Both terms are used for the same practice by some scholars, while others utilize it for the formal linguistic characteristics of language-contact phenomena. Meanwhile, code-switching refers to the actual, spoken usages by multilingual individuals (Bokamba & Eyamba, 1989; Clyne, 2000; Genessee, 2000). Woon (2007, p. 1) defined code-mixing as "change of one language to another within the same utterance or in the same oral/written text". Celik (2003) asserts that code-mixing is the combination of two languages which includes one word from a language in the syntax of another language while most words come from the latter language.

Code-switching vs. borrowing

It is important to make a distinction between 'code-switching' and 'borrowing', because the two phenomena are closely related and most of the times confused. As stated by Kieswetter (1995), borrowings are words that have been integrated phonologically and morphologically into the host language.

Haugen (1956, as cited in Obiamalu & Mbagwu, 2007) described borrowing as "the regular use of material from one language in another so that there is no longer either switch or overlapping except in a historical sense" (p. 52). He, however, described code-switching as a situation "where a bilingual introduces a completely unassimilated word from another language into his speech". Code-switching is divided into three types of borrowing, quasi-borrowing and true code-switching (Obiamalu & Mbagwu, 2007):

- **Borrowing:** It occurs when lexical items of a language are placed into another language and such items go through the phonological and morphological assimilations of the host language. It is used when the host language has lexical gaps.

- **Quasi-borrowing:** Quasi-borrowing is the condition we have the equivalent in the target language but bilinguals and monolinguals use the intruding language equivalent more often. There is the probability that it be assimilated into the host language or not.

- **True code-switching:** It happens when the host language equivalents are quickly available but the intruding language is chosen by the speaker. This is found only among bilinguals with different degrees of bilingualism in Farsi and English.

Studies done on teachers' code-switching in foreign language classrooms

According to Ellis (1984), learners will be deprived of valuable target language input by the use or overuse of L1 by second language and foreign language teachers will. Fillmore (1985) believed that in conditions when learners get used to receive L1 from their teacher, they are willing to ignore the TL and, hence, do not completely take advantage of valuable TL input. Also, ignoring the use of L1 does lie behind many teaching methods. For instance, the Direct Method, which has been utilized in language classes since nineteenth century allows just the target language to be utilized as a part of dialect classroom such as the language used for the exercises and teacher talk in classroom management. The very important rule is that no interpretation is allowed. Like the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method is likewise an oral-based methodology in which the target language is used in the class instead of the students' native language as there is a fear that the students' native language habits may interfere with their attempts to master the target language (Allwright, 1988).

On the opposite side of the issue, more number of researchers and analysts including Stern (1992) and Cook (2000, 2001) believed that students' L1 should have a place in foreign language classes. Such researchers attempted to scrutinize the long-held conviction of barring the L1 from the classroom. According to Cook (2000), trusting students to utilize their first language is a humanistic methodology as it grants them to say what they truly need to say. Using students' L1 is considered as a "learner-preferred strategy" (p.242). Stern (1992) emphasized "reconsidering" the use of cross lingual strategy (i.e., using each L1 and the TL). However in theory, language teaching is nowadays completely intra lingual (i.e., using the TL exclusively). According to Stern (1992, p.285), it is inevitable that the learner uses an L1 reference base so that it can help him to "orient himself in the L2 through the L1 medium or by relating L2 phenomena to their equivalents in L1".

Moodley (2007) investigated multilingual classrooms considering the use of codes-witching by English language learners in achieving specific learning objectives. In a study related to identity, Myers-Scotton (1980) suggested five maxims to be used in conversations for negotiating social identity. These maxims can be utilized to control or interpret the interrelationship of speaker/listener, and is most pertinent in weakly defined role relationships. Code switching works as both a capacity and a sign of numerous identities of the speaker. However, Myers-Scotton (1971) believed that code switching is picked by language learners to depict themselves as friendly, to ensure the listener's self-image or as a protected decision in a group having speakers of both languages.

Empirical studies of code-switching in foreign language classrooms

Guthries (1984) was one of the earliest studies to break ground on using classroom target language. Guthries examined the TL utilization of 6 college French instructors by investigating the topic of ideal classroom conditions for L2 acquisition and found that target language is mostly used by many teachers. Among the 6 teachers, 5 obviously used the TL 83 percent to 98 percent of the time.

On the other side, researchers like Rolin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002) inferred that the utilization of the mother tongue was helpful for the correct comprehension of the newly-input target language by describing 4 high school classrooms. Likewise in Macaro's (1997) study, most students, with the exception of a small group of academically inclined females reported that they prefer their instructors to use the L1 at times to improve their understanding; Many of them suggested that they could not learn if they were not able to understand their teacher.

Dilin et al. (2004) in a survey research investigated the role of L1 in the language classes in South Korea. Their study described classroom code-switching practices in South Korean high schools. The data included the language recorded from 13 high school English classrooms teachers and responses of teachers and students to the survey. They asked about their reactions regarding the maximum use of English in language classes and the challenges they confront. A few certain conclusions were made after the data analysis: 1) The instructors used nearly a low amount of English on

average (32%), which was lower than the level they and their students regarded as appropriate (53%-58%); 2) The code-switching used by teachers followed specific patterns and principles.

Despite the fact that it was not regularly rule-governed, Dilin et al. (2004) believed that the use of Korean (L1) was influential for a few reasons: 1) code-switching practices were influenced by teachers' beliefs; 2) The language teachers used affected students' language behavior in classroom although decisions that students took on what language to use mostly depended on the complexity and level of difficulty of the question; and 3) The provided curriculum guidelines affected teachers' language use; however, factors such as teaching contexts and teachers' beliefs might seriously relieve their effect.

III. METHODOLOGY

Participants

The population of the study included 460 EFL pre-intermediate students in English language institutes located in Kerman district 2, Iran. In accordance with Morgan & Krejcie (1970), 219 EFL pre-intermediate students were selected randomly as the sample size from three English language institutes.

Instruments

In order to have a general and genuine reflection of teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms, quantitative research method was used. The instrument applied in this study was one questionnaire. One questionnaire was administered to the students, and it was used for collecting data on the study of students' attitude towards teacher's code-switching in EFL classrooms. It consisted of fifteen closed-ended questions, moreover five-point Likert-scale was used for all responses with related labels (a. strongly agree, b. agree, c. neutral, d. disagree, e. strongly disagree) to gather data. It had three types of questions according to Dornyei (2007). Factual (the respondents' background information), behavioral (the respondents' lifestyles, habits, and personal history), and attitudinal questions (the respondents' beliefs, attitudes, values, and interests). Additionally, to make it easier for the students, the researcher translated the questionnaire to Farsi so that there were no misunderstanding due to the lack of English knowledge. It was designed with some modifications based on the mixture of the questionnaires of Duff and Polio (1990), Macaro (2003), Olugbara (2008), and Levine (2003).

The reliability of the questionnaire was (0.89). It was obtained through Cronbach's Alpha. It showed that the internal consistency of the questionnaire. In addition, to ensure the validity of the questionnaire, a sample of five university professors as experts of teaching English filed were asked to leave their comments for the redundant items, and to mark any unclear parts in the questionnaire. Then, the answers were analyzed based on the Content Validity Ratio Formula (CVR). In accordance with Lawsche (1975), questions whose CVR were more than 0.81 were chosen as the main items. At first the validity of the questionnaire was (0.67), but after validating the questionnaire, the validity increased to (0.84). They were obtained according to the professors' feedback and numerical value of sigma.

Data analysis

The data for this study were collected by asking the participants (students) to fill in the questionnaires. All the answers to the questions were used as data in this study. In analyzing the data of the questionnaire in this study, quantitative method was used. The obtained data were statistically analyzed by using Descriptive Statistics, Inferential Statistics, SPSS 16, and Excel 2010. In descriptive statistics, Frequency tables, Bar, and Histogram charts were used to describe the variables. In addition, Skewness, Kurtosis, Mean, and Standard Deviation were used to describe the variables. In inferential statistics, One-Sample T-Test, Independent-Sample T-Test, and Friedman Test were used to analyze the questions of the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms

To investigate students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms, the one-sample T-test was used (Table 1), a 5-point scale was conducted, and the base mean was considered 3. Regarding the significant level of the test, with more than 99% confidence, it can be said that there is a significant difference between base mean and the mean of agreement with code-switching ($\Delta M = 0.33$). The mean score of agreement with code-switching ranked higher than the base mean score ($M = 3.33$) (Figure 1). That is the positive view of the majority of English students in this case was more than the mean score which means students strongly agreed with teachers' code-switching from English to Persian ($t_{(218)} = 5.97, p < 0.01$).

TABLE 1
ONE-SAMPLE T-TEST TO INVESTIGATE THE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS TEACHER'S CODE-SWITCHING IN EFL CLASSROOMS

Test Value =3					
Mean of Variable	N	T	df	Sig.	Mean Difference
3.33	219	5.97	218	0.0001	0.33

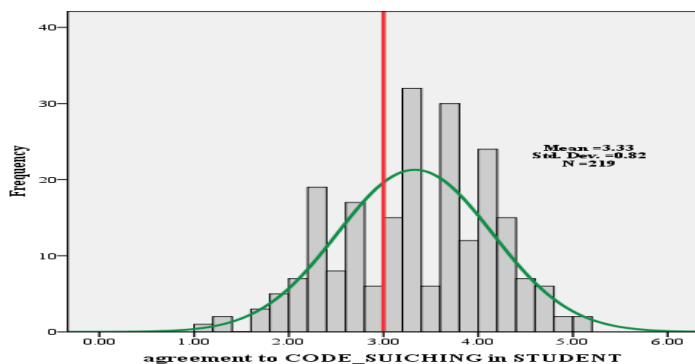


Figure 1. Histogram of Students' Attitude towards Teacher's Code-Switching in EFL Classrooms

Students' attitude towards factors that cause teacher's code-switching in EFL classrooms

Regarding Table 2 and figure 2, 6 students (2.7%) believed that the teachers code switch in order to hide their lack of knowledge, 13 students (5.9%) believed that teachers can better manage the class if they use code-switching, 110 students (50.3%) believed that teachers' code-switching can enhance student learning, 31 (14.2%) believed that teachers' code-switching can enhance students' motivation, 23 students (10.5%) believed that teachers' code-switching can make an emotional relationship between the teachers and the students, and 36 students (16.4%) believed that teachers' code-switching can reduce the students' stress at exam. Thus, more than half of the students (50.3%) believed that teachers should code switch from English to Farsi to enhance students' understanding.

TABLE 2
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS FACTORS THAT CAUSE TEACHER'S CODE-SWITCHING IN EFL CLASSROOMS

Situation	Frequency	Percent
Teachers' lack of knowledge	6	2.7%
Teachers' class management	13	5.9%
Students' understanding	110	50.3%
Students' motivation	31	14.2%
teacher and student interpersonal relationship	23	10.5%
students chance of passing the exam	36	16.4%
Total	219	100%

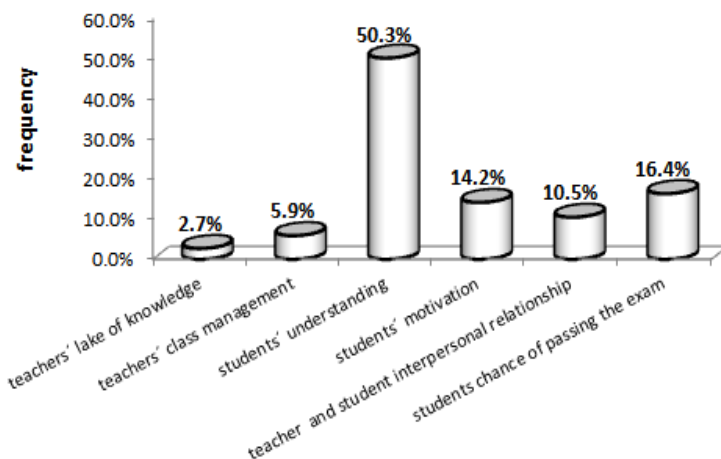


Figure 2. Percentage Distribution of Students' Attitude towards Factors that Cause Teacher's Code-Switching in EFL Classrooms

Students' attitude towards teacher's code-switching to teach English language skills in EFL classrooms

Table 3 shows that the mean agreement of students with teachers' code-switching to teach English language skills and sub skills of Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking were respectively 3.22, 3.81, 3.72, 3.24, 3.31, 3.11. So students mostly agreed with teachers' code-switching to teach Grammar (M = 3.81) and their lowest agreement was with teachers' code-switching to teach Speaking skill (M = 3.11) (Figure 3).

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS TEACHER'S CODE-SWITCHING TO TEACH ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS IN EFL CLASSROOMS

Skill	N	Very little	Little	Average	Much	Very much	Mean	Std. Deviation
Vocabulary	219	25(11.4%)	59(26.9%)	26(11.9%)	60(27.4%)	49(22.4%)	3.22	1.36
Grammar	219	6(2.6%)	35(16%)	24(11%)	84(38.4%)	70(32%)	3.81	1.13
Reading	219	7(3.2%)	35(16%)	20(9.1%)	108(49.3%)	49(22.4%)	3.72	1.08
Writing	219	17(7.8%)	41(18.7%)	52(23.7%)	90(41.1%)	19(8.7%)	3.24	1.10
Listening	219	13(6%)	52(23.7%)	43(19.6%)	76(34.7%)	35(16%)	3.31	1.17
Speaking	219	18(8.2%)	60(27.4%)	43(19.6%)	77(35.2%)	21(9.6%)	3.11	1.16

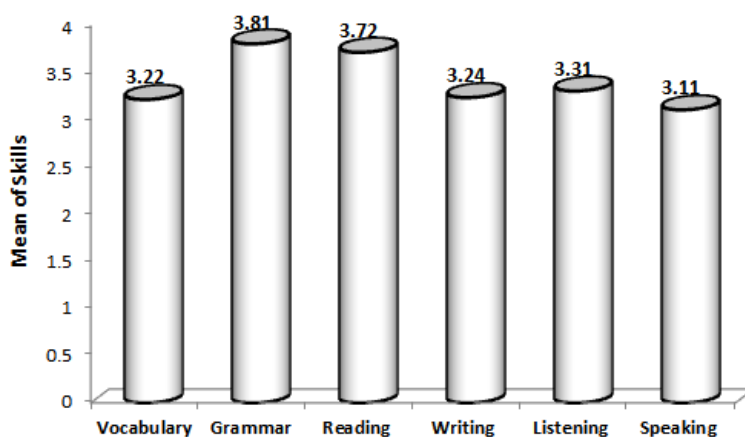


Figure 3. The Mean Score of Students' Attitude towards Teacher's Code-Switching to Teach English Language Skills in EFL Classrooms

Male and female students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms

In order to investigate male and female students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms, independent t-test was used (Table 4), given that the level of significance of this test (P-Value = 0.8) was higher than $\alpha = 0.05$. Thus with 95% sureness, it can be said the male and female students' attitude towards teacher's code-switching in EFL classrooms was not significantly different ($t_{(217)} = 0.37, p > 0.05$).

TABLE 4
INDEPENDENT T-TEST FOR COMPARING MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS TEACHER'S CODE-SWITCHING IN EFL CLASSROOMS

Gender	Agreement to code-switching			T-Test	df	Sig.
	Total number	Mean	SD			
Male	89	3.36	0.80	0.37	217	0.7
Female	130	3.31	0.83			

V. CONCLUSION

The results revealed that students held a positive attitude towards teachers' code-switching. In addition, majority of the students believed that teachers' code-switching motivated and engaged students more. Also, a number of students believed that when the teacher code switches he can make a better relationship with the students. Just 13 (5.9%) students' attitude was in favor of the idea that teaches' code-switching resulted in a better class management. Moreover, students believed that teachers' code-switching decreases anxiety and stress of the students during the examination. Finally, a small proportion of the students believed teachers code switch to hide their lack of knowledge. According to the quantitative data concerned with students' attitude towards teachers' code-switching to teach different language skills, they highly agreed with teachers' code-switching to teach grammar, writing, reading, and vocabulary. They did not regard teachers' code-switching useful to teach listening and speaking skills. In addition, attitude of students towards teachers' code-switching, in distinction of gender did not have a significant difference.

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Soheila Kabiri Samani received her M.A. degree with honor in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) from Islamic Azad University, Kerman branch, Kerman, Iran in 2015. She has been teaching English for about 6 years at different institutes and schools. Her research interests include CALL, Second Language Acquisition, reading and writing strategies, and material development.

Mehry Haddad Narafshan is currently an assistant professor at Islamic Azad University, Kerman Branch. She teaches at graduate and post graduate levels and has published a number of articles. Her main areas of interest are first and second language acquisition, critical pedagogy, technology, creative thinking and self identity.