



Review Article

The Role of Code-Switching in Moulding EFL College Students' Attitudes towards and Motivations for EFL Learning

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Abstract: *Code-switching is the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation. It is a socio-linguistic common practice in foreign language classrooms, where the native language of learners is interchangeably or reciprocally used side by side or intermittently with the target language. This article addresses code-switching as a theoretical perspective related to bilingualism and multilingualism and from the perspective of pedagogical practice. Therefore, this article seeks, theoretically and as projected in prior research findings, to identify the functions of EFL teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms. It seeks to identify the reasons that motivate EFL students to restore to code-switching in EFL classrooms. In addition, the author explores the role of code-switching in EFL college classrooms and the teachers' actual use of this sociolinguistic practice. Furthermore, the article looks into EFL students' attitudes towards the use of code-switching from a sociolinguistic viewpoint as well as it explores their motivations for learning when code-switching is used. Finally, the article seeks to identify the sociolinguistic and pedagogical implications of using code-switching, both negatively or positively in college EFL learning settings. Implications for learning and teaching foreign languages are forwarded in the end of the article.*

Keywords: *code-switching; college students; attitudes; motivation; EFL learning*

1. Introduction

Code-switching is a common sociolinguistic phenomenon. It takes place in both bilingual and multilingual communities, notably in foreign language classrooms where students and their teachers speak the same language other than the target language. However, research interest in code-switching began as a sociolinguistic phenomenon worthy of study in 1972 (Myers-Scotten, 1993). Gardner-Chloros (1991) describes code-switching as "the use of two or more languages in the same conversation or utterance" (p.136). Furthermore, Gumperz (1982a) classifies code-switching into two categories. They are situational code-switching and conversational code-switching. Situational code-switching takes place depending on the various situations it may occur in such as the workplace and school, especially when there are challenges to using the language communicatively in EFL contexts (Al-Seghayer, 2011).

On the other hand, conversational code-switching occurs when speakers are motivated by some factors when the speech takes place. It is also used when there is a need of explaining what is being said in a

conversation. Based on Gumperz's taxonomy, classroom code-switching most likely belongs to situational code switching. While many studies have been conducted in various contexts with different languages to investigate code-switching, its social impact and its sociolinguistic functions (Gumperz, 1982; Woolard, 2004; Holmes, 2000; Abalhasan & Alshalawi, 2000; Auer, 2002; Al-Khatib, 2003; Muthusamy, 2009; Nerghes, 2011; Engku Haliza Engku Ibrahim et al., 2013), little research has been conducted to examine the sociolinguistic functions of code-switching in FL classroom contexts and the teachers', parents' or students' attitudes towards code-switching.

Furthermore, almost no study has been implemented to investigate the usage of code switching by Saudi EFL teachers in public education settings. This study seeks to investigate the code-switching reasons and functions as practiced by a sample of native Arab teachers while teaching English a foreign language in a public high school in southern Saudi Arabia and their attitudes towards using it while teaching English.

In contexts where English is taught as a foreign language, the Ministry of Education policy states that English should be the sole language of teaching and teachers are not allowed to use Arabic as a language of instruction in the classroom. This decision was made to maximize the amount of exposure to the target language (English in this case) to enhance students' proficiency level in English. While this case is fair, the Egyptian context is a dominantly Arabic speaking one and English is mainly used by teachers and students inside the classroom, and is rarely spoken out of the classroom. EFL teachers code-switch between Arabic and English on a daily basis to make things easy for learners and themselves, especially when they explain grammatical points or other pedagogical issues in the English language.

In this context, this article seeks to identify the causes behind EFL teachers' utilization of code switching inside EFL classrooms and their attitudes towards it, their students' motivations for learning English in EFL classes where code-switching occurs and the pedagogical functions of code-switching from a sociolinguistic and pedagogical perspective.

Therefore, this article seeks, at least at the theoretical level and based on prior research findings, to identify the functions of EFL teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms. It also seeks to identify from previous research the reasons that motivate EFL students to restore to code-switching in EFL classrooms EFL settings. In addition, this article explores the role of code-switching in EFL college classrooms and the teachers' actual use of this sociolinguistic practice. Moreover, it analyses EFL students' attitudes towards the use of code-switching from a sociolinguistic viewpoint as well as it explores their motivations for learning when code-switching is used. Furthermore, the article seeks to identify the sociolinguistic and pedagogical implications of using code-switching, both negatively or positively in college EFL learning settings.

2. Code-switching as a Sociolinguistic Phenomenon

According to Milroy and Muysken (1995, p.7), code-switching is “the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation”. Earlier, code-switching was defined by Poplack (1980, p. 583) as “the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent.” In this light, recent research views code-switching as a sociolinguistic phenomenon that ...

“exists in many multilingual societies where people use more than one language to communicate on a daily basis, such as Singapore, the Philippines, India, the USA, Spain and China ... [or] the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent” (Mazur, Karolczak, Rzepka and Araki, 2016, p. 55).

In this vein, Mazur, Karolczak, Rzepka and Araki (2016) theorized that code-switching takes account of two related processes: i.e., code-mixing and code-changing, the former with code-switching taking place at the lexical level in language situations where teachers or students may find no immediate corresponding word or sentence in the target language, whereas the latter case of code-switching, i.e., code-changing, occurs at the semantic level, in case an idea may be better formed in the native language than in the target foreign language.

Code-switching can be resorted to in multilingual situations, Saudi Arabia being an example of multilingual countries, where there is a diversity of languages and multilingual speakers who alternate between languages in a ‘conversational episode’ (Al Masaeed, 2013, p. 13). By itself, code-switching includes some sort of language swapping, or even dialectal alterations, or stylistic adjustments in the spoken language in variation contact and conversation situations. Similarly, Romaine (1994) defines

code-switching as

“a communicative option available to a bilingual member of a speech community on much the same basis as switching between styles or dialects is an option for the monolingual speaker” (p.59).

Further, researchers such as Auer (1995) describes code-switching as a healthy discourse strategy through language users, basically bilinguals,

“can indicate change of participant, parenthetical comments, or a topic shift, along with other discourse features. For him, access to a second language “provides specific resources not available to monolingual speakers for the constitution of socially meaningful verbal activities” (p. 115).

Simply, yet clearly couched, code-switching is the process in which bilinguals or multilinguals keep "going from one language to the other in mid-speech when both speakers know the same two languages" (Cook, 2008, p. 174).

From these oft-cited definitions, it can be adduced that code-switching describes a sociolinguistic phenomenon which consists of language switches, dialectal variations, and stylistic, pragmatic alterations and syntactic or structural variations at the word, phrase or sentence levels. Therefore, code-switching is a discrete language behaviour of bilingual speakers or foreign language learners which denotes a concomitant feature of their communicative process (MacSwan, 2000).

However, there is a variety of sociolinguistic variables and features of communicative language use that affect code-switching (Lipski, 1985; MacSwan, 2004; McClure, 1981; Poplack, 1980). Code-switching is resorted to naturally in bilingual speech and by bilingual or multilingual language users in human language communities. This process is ‘socially embedded’ in communicative language situations where the fluency of communication is influenced by such cognitive challenges such as memory, lapses in communication and easy access to a community of language users who know both the native language and target language (Lanza, 2008, p. 73). To clarify this process, Weinreich (1968) explains that "when a language contact situation is examined in detail, the interrelation of socio-cultural conditions and linguistic phenomena is apparent' (p. 83), indicating that when the target language is used by interlocutors who use the target language but share the same native language, they tend to code-switch naturally to keep on the communication process.

In this context, Thomason and Kaufman (1988) maintain that in social contexts, code-switching is resorted to in real-time language use where language switches are determined by ‘contact-induced’ factors in the communicative language situation. Researchers further claim that social situations determine why and how people code-switch, irrespective of the requirements of the language use situation, especially when the flow of communication or fluency is threatened by discontinuation. In this sense, case studies show significant differences in codeswitching behaviours in individuals who are involved in any bilingual or multilingual speech communities (Moyer, 1998; Poplack, 1980; Zentella, 1997).

Extant research in bilingualism and emanating theories have tackled the sociolinguistic and socio-cultural features of learners’ native language and the target language in real-time communicative language use situations. This research suggests that code-switching plays a role in intercultural communication (e.g., Heller, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 1993a; 1993b; Li Wei, 1994). For example, Angermeyer (2010) summarises research on code-switching from a sociolinguistic perspective as follows:

“It is perhaps no coincidence that these studies rank among the most prominent and influential examples of codeswitching research, as the divergence in speakers’ repertoires has allowed researchers to interpret incidents of codeswitching in relation to the participants’ language preferences and to the macro-sociolinguistic factors that condition them” (p.469).

Today, applied linguists and TESOL’ers now entertain some sort of research interest in the study of code-switching, especially in bilingual/multilingual settings; this research interest has arisen in situations where EFL is taught in classrooms. Research findings on the topic indicated that bilinguals and foreign language learners can use the target language communicatively in their daily conversations with their interlocutors steadily as a result of the interactions between interlocutors, language situation, communication message, content, or topic (Genesee, 2000, 2002; Genesee, Boivin, & Nicoladis, 1996). These variables cover the mode, theme and topic of all types of human discourse that may necessitate

interlocutors to resort to code-switching. In this vein, sociolinguistic research considers code-switching as 'a vehicle for their social play' (Gort, 2012; Reyes, 2001). Therefore, code-switching is best investigated within the realms of sociolinguistics, and especially within the peripheries of bilingualism research (Genesee, 2002; Gort, 2006; Kenner, 2004; Zentella, 1997).

Extant research investigated the several types of code-switching (Jingxia, 2010; Blom and Gumperz, 1972; Poplack, 1980; Milroy and Muysken, 1995; Krishna, 2010) from pedagogical, linguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives. The most detailed study on code-switching was conducted by Gumperz (1982) in which the researcher classified code-switching into two types, conversational code switching and situational code switching. Conversational code-switching is defined as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems" (Gumperz, 1982, p. 59). Code switching of this kind is likely to take place subconsciously while non-native speakers of the target language are prompted by some factors when conversing per se in oral discourse.

However, situational code-switching is defined as changes in language choice. These changes are caused by the situation in which the target language is spoken. Situational code switching may occur at university, school, workplace, or any public gatherings where the situation requires formality of language use. According to Gumperz's (1982) taxonomy, classroom code-switching can be considered as a type of situational code-switching.

Merritt et al. (1992) contend that reasons for using code-switching in foreign language learning classrooms are inevitably more complicated than can be legislated by language policy on the language of instruction in classrooms. Though it is regulated in the institutions and the establishments of English language that English teachers should only use English in teaching, classroom factors could be more attracting to code-switching for both learners and teachers. Teachers might code switch to the native language for various functions and reasons. Subsequently, code-switching in this research is the alternative use of English and Arabic in the English classes by the teachers.

Code-switching in foreign language classrooms is a common practice, usually resorted to for facility of using the mother tongue of learners or for ease of helping in the development of the target language (Lai, 1996; Cole, 1998; Critchley, 1999; Schweers, 1999; Burden, 2001; Tang, 2002; Greggio & Gil, 2007). In this regard, Qing (2010) suggests that code switching is a beneficial tool in serving some sociolinguistic functions that aim at enhancing the language-learning environment. Schweers (1999) pointed out that the majority of EFL teachers in Spain are prompted to use code switching in their classes either by the necessity of wanting to ease the language of instruction or to make teaching some ambiguous grammatical points of explanations of new lexicon for the learners. The participants in Schweers's (1999) study also claim that code switching is more effective and less time-consuming, especially in teaching grammar points or new vocabulary.

However, Cook (2001) claims that two conditions should be considered while resourcing code-switching by language teachers. First, code switching should be avoided in case of multilingual classrooms as it will be useless and more confusing for the majority of students who do not share the same mother language. Secondly, the competence of the teachers in L1 of the students should be highly considered in determining appropriately when affective code switching could be usefully and effectively expected.

Code switching should be limited to students with low English proficiency levels just to clarify the meaning or to explain grammar. With high-level students of English proficiency, code switching should be strictly prohibited. However, in EFL contexts where students are only exposed to English in the classroom only, code-switching may be negatively adversary to their future communication with native speakers in the target language. This argument was supported in many previous studies (See for example, Eldridge, 1996 and Sert, 2005) whose findings claimed that the use of code switching in translation instruction all the time could eventually be conducive to preventing students from being autonomous learners.

3. Motivations for Code-switching

Anecdotal evidence from action research as well as empirical research findings from controlled experimental studies demonstrate that the use of the first language to alternate the target language is typically used as a resource and stratagem in foreign language learning and communication. As such, code-switching can help language learners to certainly acquire the meanings of unknown vocabulary items and understand grammar rules (Eldridge, 1996; Grima, 2001; Macaro, 2001; Martin-Jones, 1995). Therefore, code-switching is a characteristically reciprocal behaviour of bilingual students typical of EFL learning/teaching settings. Code-switching is thus a distinctive language phenomenon expressive of the processes involved in communicative language use (MacSwan, 2000). Previous studies have established

the fact that code-switching is a complex, rule-governed, and regular communicative strategy naturally utilised by competent bilingual/multilingual language users in any language use situation (Gingràs, 1974; Pfaff, 1979; Timm, 1975).

Previous studies that early explored the phenomenon of code-switching (e.g. Blom and Gumperz, 1972) were partly influenced by the seminal research of Ferguson's (1959) and Fishman's (1965), especially with regard to their seminal work on diglossia and register, in the tradition of sociology rather than sociolinguistics.

Extant research in the EFL context further showed that English language learners who resort to code-switching with their partners in conversational dyads are still in a developing stage of foreign language learning; the more they resort to code-switching, the less proficiency level they attained (Fantini, 1985; Genesee, 2001; Meisel, 2004; Paradis, Nicoladis, & Genesee, 2000). EFL learners stereotypically and methodically use code-switching as a function of the difficulty of the communicative message, and partially, the topic of conversation (Genesee, 2000, 2002; Genesee, Boivin, & Nicoladis, 1996).

Foreign language learners have been found to resort to code-switching in a variety of ways determined by the roles of interlocutors in contact or conversation dyads (Blom & Gumperz, 1972; 1982b; Valdés-Fallis, 1976). Therefore, the reasons why interlocutors resort to code-switching typically relate to the topic, the mode and theme of discourse. Some topics are better experienced in some languages than others. Therefore, interlocutors resort to code-switching because they feel they are better able to express themselves in the language that they switch to. According to Stroud, "speakers who code-switch are seen as appealing to the rights, obligations and identities associated with each language" (Stroud, 1998, p. 322). Thus, sociolinguistic researchers have recognized a direct association between a language and its cultural values, which would lead a speaker to switch to a language s/he feels they can summon their identity in more easily. In this sense, Cheng (2013) aptly observed,

"multilingual speakers use two or more languages as a way of accomplishing a vast array of functions in interaction, such as identity construction, stance-taking, and the building up of diverse social relations." (p. 870).

Furthermore, code-switching could be affected by attitudes and motivation. Some language users tend to express their ideas in the native language more eloquently than in the target language, especially when they are motivated. Topics of discourse, or themes, influence the liability of learners to resort to code-switching. For example, cultural themes, including customs, traditions and religion, may adduce Arab learners to code-switch to Arabic when they speak English or talk about such topics in English. In such language contact situations, learners openly code-switch to Arabic in conversations to make communication better accessible (Reyes, 2001). Consequently, language users typically use codeswitching as a natural communicative approach to facilitate bilingualism (Genesee, 2002; Gort, 2006; Kenner, 2004; Zentella, 1997).

Researchers and practitioners in the ELT fields suggested that code switching strategies can be used to develop better attitudes and enhance motivations for learning as well as help in the transfer of learning through maintaining classroom social connections, and maintaining discipline in classroom management (Creese & Martin, 2003); Ferguson, 2003; Heller and Martin-Jones, 2001). Researchers have also examined the social and psychological benefits of deep code switching, suggesting that restricting target language use as a medium of instruction in ELT settings is said to lead to conflicts and tensions in foreign language classrooms (Baker, 2000; Cummins, 1991, 2000; Fishman, 1991; Lee, Wei and Martin, 2009). In this context, Lee, Wei and Martin (2009) indicated that restricting the "one language only" policy in foreign language learning environments might produce...

"tensions and conflicts between the dominant language ideologies and policies in the so-called bilingual education programmes on the one hand and the actual practices of teachers and pupils on the other" (Li Wei & Wu, 2009, p. 208).

The area of code-swapping as an emergent sociolinguistic research line has generated significant research in bilingual and multilingual communities over the past few decades. Myers-Scott (1993) stated that interest in code switching has arisen in 1972. Gardner-Chloros (2009) simply referred to code switching as a sociolinguistic process which entails "using two or more languages in the same conversation or utterance" (p. 97). Gumperz (1982a), a pioneer in code switching research, categorized code-switching

into two classifications: conversational code-switching and situational code-switching. Conversion-based code switching takes place when interlocutors are motivated by different psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic factors while speaking, while situational code switching occurs according to the requirements of the context in which conversations occur.

According to Gumperz' classification of code-switching, classroom-based context code-switching relates to situational code-switching. Prior research on code-switching found out that attitudes and motivations affect and are affected by code-switching in terms of its social effects, and its functions (Gumperz, 1982a; Abalhassan & Alshalawi, 2000; Holmes, 2000; Auer, 2002; Al-Khatib, 2003; Woolard, 2004; Muthusamy, 2009; Nerghes, 2011; Ibrahim et al., 2013). Despite the plethora of research on code-switching in EFL contexts, very few were launched to investigate the role of code-switching in the EFL classroom context in Saudi Arabia, and virtually no previous research was conducted to explore the impact of code-switching on Saudi EFL university teachers's attitudes towards teaching in English only and the students' motivations for learning English.

4. Attitudes towards Code-switching

Code-switching is a natural language event that typically occurs in foreign language classroom settings. Prior research suggested that code-switching can be an important factor in enhancing English language teaching and the learning by better impacting teachers' and students' attitudes and motivations (Lai, 1996; Cole, 1998; Critchley, 1999; Schweers, 1999; Burden, 2001; Tang, 2002; Greggio & Gil, 2007). Moreover, Qing (2002), in this sense, advocated that code-switching could be utilized as a resourceful strategy to improve teaching and learning in the foreign language-learning milieu. In this vein, too, Schweers (1999) could deduce that many English-Spanish teachers were motivated to use code-switching in their classes and they liked code-switching as an effective strategy of teaching, thereby developing better attitudes towards the strategy. However, in Schweers's study, the participants revealed that code-switching could spare them more time in word explanations to use in additional language use activities.

In addition, Cook (2002) argued that two conditions should be taken into account when language teachers use code switching for pedagogical reasons. First, code switching in multilingual classrooms should be avoided because in multilingual settings, code-switching will tend to cause misapprehension and misperception since multilingual students have different first languages. Furthermore, the teachers' ability to code-switch to the first language of the students should be taken into account when there are affective reasons expected to influence teaching such as attitudes and motivation. However, this observation warrants more investigations in EFL contexts – a good rationale for conducting the proposed study.

Nevertheless, in EFL learning/teaching settings, where students receive instruction in English only, code-switching could negatively impact the flow of communication in real-time language contact situations (Al-Mohanna, 2010; Al-Seghayer, 2005). Therefore, some researchers such as Eldridge (1996) and Sert (2005) contended that irrational code-switching through translation to the native language of students can ultimately end up in students refraining from developing fluency in the target language.

5. Rationale for Code-switching in EFL Teaching Settings

Prior research revealed that teachers and students demonstrated several reasons or pedagogical functions of code-switching (Suleiman, 2000; Holmes, 2000; Auer, 2002; Al-Khatib, 2003; Alsbai, 2010; Abdel Tawwab, 2014). For instance, Abdel Tawwab (2014) found out that language learners tend to code-switch from one language to another to show that they belong to a particular social group, partake in social encounters, or engage in short discussions, influenced by their desire to express certain emotions, or show they do not understand specific content. Therefore, code-switching performs the social function of maintaining solidarity in a group of learners. In this meaning, Martin-Jones (1995) further indicates that ..

"... whenever a bilingual who has the same language background as the learners switches into shared codes, s/he is invariably expressing solidarity with the learners. Code-switching is employed in more subtle and diverse ways in bilingual classroom communication. Teachers and learners exploit code contrasts to demarcate different types of discourse, to negotiate and renegotiate joint frames of reference and to exchange meaning on the spur of the moment" (p. 98).

As Holmes (2000) points out, "a speaker may switch to another language as a signal to group

membership and shared ethnicity within the recipient." In this sense, al-Khatib (2003) found out that interlocutors could code-switch in cases where they wanted to show good attitudes towards the target language or to indicate that they belong to an elite that speaks the target language. Furthermore, Alsbej (2010) further studied code switching between English and Arabic at the absolute construction level and showed that learners tended to code-switch to English to show that they were classy and highly esteemed.

Teachers tend to code switching to impose discipline and classroom management rules (Nzwanga, 2000). They also tend to code-switch to the native language of students when they want to present, explain, or comment on an excerpt of reading or listening passage presented to the students in the target language. Teachers believe that code-switching can make meanings more accessible, understandable and easier to process on the part of the students.

Prior research has shown that code switching may work in cases where one word is missing in both languages. Thus, teachers use code exchange to elucidate the meanings of words, sentences, concepts or chunks of discourse that may interfere with listening comprehension (Gumperz, 1982b; Karen, 2003; Tien & Liu, 2006). For example, Qing (2010) revealed that EFL instructors code-switched to the students' native language by translating vague vocabulary and explaining difficult grammar points. Gompres (1982a) noted that code switching allows teachers to elucidate the meanings of new difficult vocabulary and thus could help enhance learning.

In accordance with his research, Auerbach (1993) recognised a variety of reasons why teachers and students in foreign language learning settings resort to code branding, including, inter alia, classroom management, grammar rule drilling and explanation, giving directions and checking comprehension, and facilitating cultural impediments. The findings of Walt's research (2008) on the role of code-switching in English language learning classes showed that teachers code-switched to Afrikaans to give instructions and check comprehension of the students.

6. Concluding remarks

The review of previous research in this article has showed a noticeable impact of code-switching on EFL students as well as on their teachers when they revert to code-switching despite the claim that code-switching is not a proper practice in teaching English as a foreign language. This reversion to code-switching should shed more light on EFL learners' attitudes and motivations with regard to code-switching on the part of teachers compared to their students in EFL contexts. In addition, results of pertinent research are expected to explain the multiple functions in EFL classes such as for topic switching, affective functions, repetitive purposes and for addressing some foreign language features. In addition, findings from prior research on code-switching and translanguaging can also help profile the EFL college teachers' attitudes towards code-switching. Furthermore, it is also expected that the autonomous, unnecessary reversion to code-switching and translanguaging in EFL learning settings would reveal that the weakness of English instructors as to their competence, their attitudes towards English, emotional expressions, the levels of students' English proficiency determine the number of the occurrence of code-switching inside foreign language classroom should be considered as important pedagogical variables that should be taken notice of when designing instruction of college English courses.

Code-switching is a common sociolinguistic phenomenon that takes place in EFL classrooms and is regarded as an incredibly efficient method of communication that allows foreign language learners to use their language repertoire, both in Arabic and English, to facilitate and foster their communication and comprehension of spoken English. Most prior research findings are of a congruent opinion that foreign language tend to employ their language competence or repertoire in their native language as well as of the target language, regardless of their proficiency in the target language. Learners usually find it easy and helpful to resort to code-switching to make their ideas intelligible and communicable. They also find code-switching naturally helpful in assisting them to comprehend learning tasks and activities as well as develop their awareness of the communication skills they need to develop, indicating their recognition of their need to enhance their communicative competence in English.

Pedagogical implications inherent in the findings of prior research indicate that teachers and language courses developers should show flexibility in allowing some code-switching to naturally occur, as by doing so, it will help students recognise how and what to develop their English in regard to their communicative and linguistic competences. It is recommended that further research need to employ mixed methods designs and collection of qualitative and quantitative data to further probe into the benefits and perils of allowing code-switching to occur in formal college settings where English is used in order to achieve a better understanding of the actual practices of EFL college students and their instructors and the implications for

code-switching.

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