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RESEARCH PAPER

Teaching in Two Tongues: Code-Switching Patterns in ESL

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ABSTRACT

The current study examines and describes how the English language teachers / instructors and students / ESL learners perceive the use of code-switching in English language classrooms. It also examines the patterns and functions of Code Switching (CS) in an ESL classroom. The main objective of the study is to understand the significance of different code-switching functions and their role in teaching and learning process particularly of English as a second language. The study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature as the data is collected through observations and questionnaires. For the study purpose, the participants were selected randomly from undergraduate students and teachers from three different departments of University of Sargodha, namely, Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. The study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, involving questionnaires and classroom observations to analyze how teachers employ code-switching. SPSS was used for statistical analysis. The findings of the research implicate that code-switching is frequently practiced in ESL classes across the country. The conclusions are drawn that code-switching has a positive impact on the teaching and learning of the English language as a second language.

| **KEYWORDS** | Code-Switching, English as a second Language, Questionnaires |

Introduction

Code-switching, the interchange between languages within a single talk, has become a focal point in the study of second language acquisition (SLA). Scholars from various disciplines, including sociolinguistics, anthropology, language education, and psycholinguistics, have demonstrated substantial interest in examining code-switching dynamics and its implications (Sipra, 2007; Ewert, 2010). Code-switching is a strategy that is used both ways (Barandagh et al., 2013).

Historically, code-switching in language classrooms, particularly in foreign language learning contexts, faced resistance and criticism. This opposition was most notable during the late 19th century with the introduction of the Direct Method, which emphasized exclusive use of the target language for expediting language acquisition (Cook, 2001). However, these stringent restrictions on code-switching have since evolved, reflecting changing attitudes in numerous educational institutions, including those in Pakistan (Sharwood & Truscott, 2008).

In Pakistan, a multilingual society, English occupies the status of a second language. In a multilingual society, the possibility of using code switching increases (Setati & Adler, 2000). Many educational institutions have adopted English as the primary medium of instruction to enhance the English proficiency of local students (Gulzar, 2010). This emphasis on English proficiency is driven by its perceived

importance in accessing global job opportunities. Additionally, the widespread availability of knowledge and information in English is considered a significant asset, enabling language proficiency and granting students access to a diverse array of academic and professional fields.

The significance of English proficiency extends beyond mere language acquisition, as it is seen as a vital tool for knowledge acquisition. English proficiency equips students to engage with a wide spectrum of academic disciplines, granting them access to information, research, and literature across various domains, including science, technology, business, and the humanities (Cert, 2005).

Furthermore, code-switching is frequently observed in multicultural and multilingual communities, and it has garnered considerable attention in the context of second language acquisition. Gumperz (1982) has provided an accepted definition of code-switching, characterizing it as the juxtaposition of segments from two distinct grammatical systems or subsystems within the same conversation.

Literature Review

Code-switching, a widely observed phenomenon in countries with bilingual and multilingual populations who regularly use more than one language in their daily lives, has attracted significant research attention. Studies have revealed that language teaching and learning encounters certain challenges, primarily stemming from students' limited comprehension and proficiency in their second language (Greggio & Gil, 2007). To investigate the occurrence of code-switching in Malaysian schools, Yahaya et al (2009) conducted a study involving science and math teachers. Their research indicated that teachers encountered difficulties when delivering lessons, particularly when explaining intricate concepts in the target language instead of their native language. This often necessitated seeking assistance from English language teachers to address these challenges (Then & Ting, 2011). Appel and Muysken (1990) defined code-switching as the proficient use of multiple languages by an individual without difficulty. Hall (1995) has emphasized the association between bilingualism, multilingualism, and the school environment, underlining that bilingual individuals possess distinct perspectives on language in comparison to monolinguals (De Klerk, 1995). Baker (1996) has underscored the advantages of mastering multiple languages, including the development of uniqueness, fluency, flexibility, and the enhancement of creative thinking. Importantly, code-switching has been recognized as a valuable tool in the classroom, contributing to improvements in the teaching and learning process (Olugbara, 2008). Raza et al (2022) in their study in the Pakistani context observed that code-switching is a regular phenomenon in EFL classrooms, and is encouraged by both students and teachers. In brief, code-switching is a common practice in multilingual societies, allowing individuals to work with multiple languages simultaneously.

Material and Methods

This study conducted a thorough analysis of the entire classroom setting without excluding any participants. The primary focus of the investigation was on classroom interactions, which involved observing all participants, including both teachers and students. The study included an observation and examination of class room interactions. Classroom discourse analysis refers to the study of the language used in various interactions by both students and teachers (Allwright & Bailey, 1991).

Both quantitative and qualitative tools are used. Questionnaires were prepared and served with multiple options on a five point Likert scale. A qualitative approach was adopted with the intention of addressing the research questions.

Data Collection

To collect data from ESL classrooms, the researcher designed separate questionnaires for both teachers and students. These questionnaires were customized to suit the distinct roles of teachers and students. The questions were crafted to investigate the functions and underlying reasons for the use of code-switching by both teachers and learners in the second language learning classrooms. Questionnaires were structured on a five point Likert Scale.

The data for this study was gathered from three distinct departments of University of Sargodha, i.e. Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics. The selection of these departments was made to ensure a comprehensive perspective on the use of code-switching in English lessons. Specifically, lessons conducted in the English language were recorded and transcribed to serve as the primary data source. Notably, all participants in this study were English language teachers who were provided with a questionnaire featuring a proper introduction and explanation, with each question offering five possible response options.

As far as the participants are concerned, there were certain pre-defined parameters to keep the data homogeneous. The participants were the students of BS classes, aged between 18- 22 years. All did their intermediate with science. All the students selected had their schooling in private schools. As far the teachers are concerned, they were all English language teachers with at least five year teaching experience at undergraduate level.

In the case of the student questionnaire, it consisted of two sections. The first section, focused on collecting basic demographic information from the participating students, while the second section delved into the various functions and reasons underlying the use of code-switching in the English language classroom. As for the questionnaire provided to teachers, it also had two sections. Section A was designed to gather demographic details about the teachers, and Section B comprised questions aimed at understanding the teachers' attitudes towards code-switching. The responses collected from questionnaire were processed for statistical analysis on SPSS to collect the mean values and to record the descriptive statistics.

Results and Discussion

This section details the results of the analysis of the data collected from students and teachers through observations and through questionnaires.

Responses of Questions

Teachers and students have positive attitude towards code-switching (English and Urdu) in the classroom

Table 1
Responses of teachers and students towards CS in ESL classroom

Response to CS	Teachers	Students
Strongly Agree	40%	60%
Agree	35%	40%
Neutral	25%	

Disagree	
Strongly Disagree	

The table above presents responses from 20 teachers and 250 students. These teachers came from diverse backgrounds in terms of gender, educational levels, age, and the language of instruction. The data in Table 1 indicates that both teachers and students hold almost similar views regarding the practice of code-switching in the classroom. Specifically, 40% teachers and 60% of students strongly support the use of code-switching in class. The table (Table 1) highlights that a significant percentage of both students and teachers maintain a positive attitude towards the use of code-switching to Urdu or Punjabi in the classroom. The figure below is a graphic display of the responses which clearly show the positive inclination to suing code CS in ESL classroom.

Table 2
Patterns of CS

Pattern of CS	Teachers	Students
Intra sentential CS	25%	20%
Inter sentential CS	45%	60%
Tag CS	30%	20%

The table (Table 2) illustrates that the most prevalent code-switching pattern utilized by the majority of teachers in the classroom is inter-sentential code-switching, where teachers' transition between languages during their teaching sessions based on situational demands. In contrast, only 25% of teachers employed intra-sentential code-switching, which involves switching languages within a single sentence. A significant proportion, accounting for 45% of participants, favoured inter-sentential code-switching, characterized by the switching of languages between sentences. Additionally, 30% of teachers from the three departments engaged in tag code-switching within the classroom context. As far students' data is concerned, majority of the students used inter-sentential code-switching.

Table 3
Reasons of CS

Reasons of CS	Teachers	Students
Finding no word	10%	5%
Better Understanding	25%	15%
Habitual	10%	10%
Making it easy for students	50%	60%
Making it easy for teachers	5%	10%

The data collected clearly indicates that both teachers and students feel that code switching make things easy for students. Majority of teachers (50%) and students (60%) find it one of the strong reasons to code switching. The other reason for code switching as felt by the teachers (25%) is for the better understanding of the students. 15% students also thought it a valid reason for switching the codes.

Table 4
Summary of form and function for CS

Form and Function of CS	Teachers	Students
Clarification	70%	65%
Translation	45%	35%
Socializing	20%	10%

Instructing	65%	60%
Incompetence	10%	80%
Sense of insecurity	15%	80%

Table 4 represents some interesting observation. Majority of the students and teachers favoured that CS is used in the ESL classroom for clarification of the lesson. Both consider that teachers switch language when they feel that students are feeling uneasy and that English is creating hindrance in their understanding. 45% teachers and 35% students opined that teachers use CS for translation. Again the reason appears to be the same, i.e. making the lesson easy and understandable for the students. There was an opinion regarding the use of CS for socialising, but neither teachers not students think it a valid reason. Use of CS as an instructing tool is favoured by both teachers and students. The teachers and students opinion differs drastically on the question of incompetence or fear of insecurity. Teachers disagreed as majority of them thought that they use CS because they want their students understand the lesson. The students (80%) on the other hand felt that that the students use CS due to fear of being ridiculed if they speak wrong and that they feel they lack in competence of speaking English.

Table 5
Summary of the Time and Functions for CS

When CS in used	Teachers	Students
Starting a new topic	40%	55%
During lesson	45%	46%
Towards the end of the lesson	55%	70%
To emphasise	75%	40%
To create friendly environment	70%	80%

Discussion

The in-depth analysis of data from both the questionnaires and classroom recordings has yielded significant insights, leading to the following conclusions and findings. Upon a comprehensive examination of the questionnaire responses, it is evident that code-switching, the practice of shifting from English to Urdu or Punjabi, is a common occurrence within the English classrooms at the University of Sargodha. Importantly, this phenomenon is not limited to a specific group; both teachers and students engage in code-switching for various reasons. This linguistic strategy is consistently employed in a range of instructional contexts, where Urdu and Punjabi are used alongside English. In essence, the study's findings highlight the widespread and routine nature of code-switching in educational settings, emphasizing that both teachers and students actively embrace this practice as a regular part of classroom communication and instruction. Following are some of the specific findings:

- The study uncovers that in the English language classrooms at the University of Sargodha, both teachers and students exhibit bilingual proficiency in Urdu and English. Consequently, code-switching is a pervasive practice, occurring both consciously and unconsciously. Notably, both teachers and students manifest a favourable attitude toward code-switching, endorsing its application.
- Among the teachers, who demonstrate fluency in both Urdu and English, code-switching is actively utilized within the classroom. This practice takes shape in three distinct forms: tag, inter-sentential, and intra-sentential patterns, with inter-sentential code-switching emerging as the predominant pattern.
- Code-switching from English to Urdu or Punjabi serves a multifaceted array of functions. These functions encompass checking comprehension, fostering social

interaction, providing instructions, and nurturing closer rapport with students. It is noteworthy that teachers frequently employ code-switching when elucidating intricate and abstract vocabulary.

- The foremost role of code-switching within the classroom context is to enhance comprehension, elucidate concepts, and facilitate translation. Furthermore, it contributes to the cultivation of a warm and convivial learning environment.

- In the context of second language classrooms, students hold a positive perception of code-switching, recognizing it as a valuable strategy that bolsters their prospects for academic achievement. They contend that code-switching enhances their understanding during lectures, particularly when they encounter challenging concepts.

- The practice of code-switching from English to Urdu or Punjabi is widespread across various departments at the University of Sargodha during both lectures and interpersonal interactions. Although a minority of students and teachers express concerns about code-switching potentially disrupting the language learning process, the majority express support for its application in English classrooms.

Conclusion

The research findings highlight that the primary and most important function of code-switching in English classrooms is the translation of complex and unfamiliar vocabulary, as well as aiding students' understanding. The analysis of classroom observations and questionnaire responses strongly indicates that code-switching is a natural and widespread practice among bilingual teachers and students. Both groups agree that they use code-switching from English to Urdu or Punjabi for various purposes. In essence, the deliberate use of code-switching can be highly advantageous in the classrooms at the University of Sargodha, particularly when employed with the clear goal of enhancing understanding and effectively conveying knowledge to students. It serves as a tool to bridge language gaps and facilitate a more efficient learning process, underscoring its potential as a pedagogical tool when applied thoughtfully. The findings corresponds with the results of Aguirre (1988) and Tariq et al (2013)

Pedagogical Implications

Some of the pedagogical implications based on this study can be chalked out:

Teachers need training to understand the value of code-switching for improving comprehension and knowledge transfer. They should also be proficient in both English and the native language to use code-switching effectively, especially for translating complex vocabulary.

Teachers should educate students about when and how to use code-switching for clarification and better understanding. Institutions can establish guidelines that encourage the beneficial use of code-switching for learning purposes.

Students generally have a positive view of code-switching, so classrooms should foster an environment where students feel comfortable using both languages. Providing multilingual resources can further support code-switching and enhance understanding.

Ongoing research and professional development opportunities for teachers can ensure they use code-switching effectively. Institutions should implement monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure code-switching aligns with educational goals and doesn't hinder language development.

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