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The impact of code switching on students learning in Saudi Arabia

(Research)



Abstract

The employment of more than one language type in a manner that is compatible with the syntax and phonology of each language is known as code switching. When a speaker switches between two or more languages, or linguistic diversity, in the context of a single discourse or scenario, this is referred to as code switching or language switching. Polyglots, or speakers of more than one language, employ components of different languages when communicating with one another.

The issue of code flipping was not a major focus of scientific investigation in Saudi University's EFL classes. Lately, the use of transcoding has piqued the interest of scholars in the context of EFL schools in Saudi Arabia. At the end of the nineteenth century, language rotation became recognized with the restriction of using learners' first language [L1] in foreign language teaching [FLT] and was introduced by the direct method. Although some usage of code switching or machine translation is appropriate for communicative language education technique, these permitted uses are currently being debated. In the light of this, this research came to investigate the impact of code switching on students learning in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: (communicative language education, EFL, code switching, Saudi students, FLT)



1. Introduction

Code switching (CS) is described as a situation that normally occurs in a wide range of communication use circumstances. Code switching has been used to accurately express meaning and to stress comprehension of concepts and meanings (Aisha Bhatti, 2018). It is also known as the act of employing a student's first language while speaking the target language. It turns out that the nineteenth century saw a considerable increase in interest in code switching due to the emergence of modern society, globalization, and more interdependence between various ethnical groups (Alaa Al-Adnani, 2016).

The code switching process occurs in the speech of bilingual speakers who are able to speak both languages with a certain degree of proficiency (Simasiku, 2016). Alaa Al-Adnani (2016) explored code switching in bilingual communities who speak more than one language to communicate. Additionally, bilinguals use CS when trying to communicate better to convey their thoughts. Moreover, bilinguals consider this phenomenon to be widespread and can be used in all aspects of life, whether at work, study, or even in daily life.

The phrase code-switching was first used in a book by Lucy Shepherd Freeland in 1951 to describe to the indigenous peoples of California. Some literary academics have used the phrase to characterize literary styles that incorporate aspects from more than one language, such as Chinese-American, Anglo-Indian, or Latin writers' works (Simasiku, 2016).



In common parlance, transcoding refers to stable relatively informal blends of two languages, such as Spanglish, Taglish, or Hinglish (Bilgin, 2019). Bilinguals employ code-switching to prevent confusion when a sentiment or concept may be communicated more clearly in one language over another. It can also be used as a socio-lingual tool to accentuate, explain, or perform a certain communicative function when the other language lacks an equivalent phrase (Ehsan Namaziandost, 2019).

Code-switching capability describes how code-switching permits a pupil to grow independent over time by exchanging teaching from teacher to student. In addition, utilizing code switching in a class would establish a bilingual rule in which code switching is regarded as an appropriate method of interaction (Naha Dorcas Memory, 2018).

Millions of dollars are spent annually in English language education in Saudi Arabia to generate extremely competent English speakers (Alaa Al-Adnani, 2016); therefore students must attain a degree of Language skills in order to keep their studies. Foreign language classes in Saudi Arabia begin in the fourth grade, and English is one of the curriculum subjects in all public and private primary schools (Aisha Bhatti, 2018).

Because there has been lack of researches that discuss on the effect of code switching on student learning to speak a second language in Saudi Arabia, more studies are needed to allow researchers in this field to draw conclusions about whether code switching should be implemented as a



useful strategy that supports language learning (Mazeegha A. Al Tale, 2020). Students and their accomplishments, or whether they should be barred from TEFL programs. Consequently, the need for a better understanding of this phenomenon emerges in the context of the Saudi EFL classroom discourse (Aljasir, 2020). Therefore, the current research aims to investigate the impact of code switching on students learning in Saudi Arabia.

1.1 Research Problem and Questions

Native and non-native English speakers teach students in Saudi Arabia, with teachers from various language backgrounds trying to engage with students mainly in the target language (Ehsan Namaziandost, 2019). Nevertheless, Aljasir (2020) argued that because Arabic is the students' first language, some teachers are switching to it. In the context of ELI, it is crucial to note that not all teachers share the same opinion on code switching, with some perceiving it as limiting students' ability to learn the target language. Other teachers, on the other hand, do not agree that code switching can help students learn a second language in a variety of ways. These divergent views regarding the usage of code switching may have an impact on students' L2 accomplishment, which will be represented in students' English competence (Alaa Al-Adnani, 2016).



A few types of research examine the impact of code switching on student learning to speak a second language in Saudi Arabia until now. Consequently, more investigations are necessary to enable researchers in this field to form opinions about whether code switching should be applied in education as a beneficial system that incorporates language learning (Tasnim Begum, 2013). Students and their accomplishments, or whether they should be barred from TEFL programs. Aside from the importance of code switching in the classroom, it is critical to assess students' speaking achievement because "learners must be able to talk smoothly if they are to interact successfully in English" (Simasiku, 2016).

As a result, in light of the need and lack of the Arab library in general, for a study similar to the current research, the researcher aimed to answer the main question of the research problem:

What is the impact of code switching on students learning in Saudi Arabia?

Accordingly, these sub-questions are involved, which the research came to cover:

- How code switching could be used in learning a language?
- How code switching could be beneficial to Saudi students learning?
- What are the functions of code switching in learning?

1.2 Research Significance and Limitations



Several studies have fully examined the phenomenon of code-switching. They paid less attention to its impact on students learning, instead focusing on the factors those teacher leaders to change. As a result, one of the research gaps addressed by this study is the role of code switching and its impact on student learning. Furthermore, the number of transcoding studies in Saudi Arabia is limited. As a result, this study had to be conducted on Saudi teachers and students. This study may also aid future researchers in better understanding the roles of English code-switching.

Practically, the current research will contribute effectively to raising the awareness of English-speaking and non-native English teachers regarding the positive effects of applying the code switching method in the learning process. Moreover, providing copies of this research to university libraries, public libraries and researchers concerned with the topic of the current research to benefit from the information it contains and to enrich knowledge.

Research Limitations

The study of this research will be conducted during the academic year (2021-2022) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where a research sample consisting of 200 students and teachers in Saudi educational institutions will be selected in order to investigate the impact of code switching on students learning in Saudi Arabia.



1.3 Research Objectives

This research mainly aims to investigate the impact of code switching on students learning in Saudi Arabia.

The main objectives that the research seeks to cover are:

- To examine how code switching could be used in learning a language.
- To find out how code switching could be beneficial to Saudi students learning.
- To find out the functions of code switching in learning.

2. Literature Review

This part of our research contains two sections that give more clarification about our current study's topic, these sections are; 1. Code switching in learning language, 2. Impact of code switching in Saudi students' learning. 3. The function of code switching in learning.

2.1 Code switching in learning language

The term "code-switching" is made up of two words: "code," which refers to any system of signals such as numbers, words, and signals that carry concrete meaning, and "switching" (Bilgin, 2019). Furthermore, the continuous form of the verb "switch" means to change, alternate, or exchange position, i.e., the speaker alternates between a varieties of languages within a communicative event, with each language playing a



complementary role (Naha Dorcas Memory, 2018). Furthermore, CS was first defined as the juxtaposition of speech passages from two different grammatical systems or subsystems within the same exchange (Simasiku, 2016).

CS, on the other hand, is defined as "a natural linguistic phenomenon in bilingual communities in which two or more languages come into contact and alternate at the level of clauses and sentences." Pragmatists happened to more precisely define CS as the changes that occur of two languages inside a single speech. From a discourse analysis standpoint, an "utterance" is a bit of a reach of speech accompanied and predated by a lull (Ehsan Namaziandost, 2019).

In a classroom setting, learning a foreign language is accomplished through interaction between the students, who speak a previous mother tongue, and the teacher, who teaches them a language that is not their own (Alshahrani, 2018). During this communication process, the learners may achieve varying levels of language skills (TL). To address the potential issue of low English language proficiency in EFL classrooms, teachers may shift to the learners' native language to help them understand the meaning and structures of the target language, saving time and leading to more effective learning (Aljasir, 2020).

The ongoing cohabitation and interplay of two languages in bilingualism has resulted in a distinct but comprehensive language system. As a result, the teacher can employ code switching to call the students'



attention to the new information, which can subsequently be conveyed to the teaching medium. Individuals can gladly attain proper communication by participating in the communicative relationship that is significant to them, and code switching appears to be natural and purposeful phenomena that facilitates communication and learning (Shay, 2015).

Bilingual educational approaches in the academic sector can assist students in overcoming communication hurdles in the classroom. Code-switching should be viewed as part of an overall approach in bilingual contexts because it is an essential tool in the classroom for both teachers and learners who use a second language as a medium of instruction because it enables both teachers and learners to make deals meaning, facilitating active learning among them (Angel Lin, 2012).

Code-switching is no longer regarded as a manifestation of bilinguals' aspirations to achieve a language; rather, it has been observationally and ethnographically demonstrated that code-switching takes place at particular points with "great fluidity and ease," and that it carries distinctive cultural, emotional, and language features (Bilgin, 2019).

Ehsan Namaziandost (2019) asserted that bilingual language use provides as a communicative tool in learning English as a second language in the United Kingdom, and the mother tongue is an effective instrument for classroom teaching and learning. Dynamic language mixing is also an instructional method for participants who have



separated the social, cultural, societal, and linguistic aspects of their lives. Learning in these institutions appears to foster language overlap in the student and instructor rather than enforcing language division for learning and teaching (Angel Lin, 2012).

A foreign language is learnt in a classroom by interaction between students who speak their native language and the teacher who teaches them a language that is not their native language. Learners may achieve varying levels of competency in the target language during this communication process (TL) (Aisha Bhatti, 2018). To address the possible issue of low English proficiency in EFL classrooms, teachers may use the learners' native language to assist them understand the meaning and structures of the target language, saving time and driving to more successful learning (Shay, 2015).

This transformation is known as code switching (CS), and it involves switching between the original language and the tracking language. This alternation, according to Muftoon and Amjdirparvar (2018), is "a natural result of communication across multiple languages and has long been recognized in multilingual cultures" (p. 108).

Code-switching happens at the intralingual level when bilingual speakers switch between two or more languages, not just at the language transfer level when bilingual speakers switch between two or more languages (Aljasir, 2020). It can also happen intralingually when monolingual speakers in a diglossic environment utilize the low (L) and high (H)



varieties of the same word. Educated people occasionally use code-switch to the colloquial or low variety when utilizing the high variety (Ehsan Namaziandost, 2019). Individuals can also code-switch between formal and informal styles based on a variety of factors including education, social status, age, gender, environment, and participation. While the basic variation is the language of home, family, streets and markets, friendship, and solidarity, whereas the high variety is frequently taught in school and used for public speaking, formal lectures and television broadcasts, as well as writing (Mazeegha A. Al Tale, 2020).

In a variety of social situations, bilingual speakers code-switch primarily from their native language (L1) to the target language (L2). In the classroom, however, code-switching typically occurs in the opposite direction, from L2 to L1, and student's code-switch for a variety of reasons, including sociological, practical, linguistic, emotional, and expressive (Amjdiparvar, 2018).

Alshahrani (2018) justified code-switching is no longer seen as a random occurrence, but as a highly intentional behavior. Linguists and scholars are paying close attention to it because it has become a popular issue. As a result, code-switching has mostly been studied in a variety of socio-cultural contexts, particularly in ESL/EFL environments. In settings such as teacher-initiated activities or teacher-student interaction, the



bulk of code-switching cases demonstrate language comprehension use and serve a range of educational goals.

Since the end of the 20th century, there has been a major conflict between different schools of thought regarding the use of the native language in the classroom: one promoting the primary use of L2 in an EFL, and another more adaptable one endorsing the use of both L1 and L2 in the classroom (Alaa Al-Adnani, 2016). Those who argue the previous role, ie the language transfer teaching strategy, believe that teachers should prohibit the use of the mother tongue when teaching English. This is due to the fact that it interferes with proper L2 acquisition and undoubtedly impedes or prevents the benefits of strong second language skills (Ehsan Namaziandost, 2019).

Proponents of code-switching asserted that it can help students learn linguistic skills as well as language components like structural system and vocabulary (Simasiku, 2016). It can undoubtedly aid in the maintenance of effortless speech and effective communication among speakers when learners code-switch due to a lack of adequate proficiency. In this way, code-switching is perceived to improve communication and student interaction. As a result, the use of code-switching provides the connection between what learners know and do not know and can thus be viewed as a real situation in language teaching, mainly when it is done correctly (Shay, 2015).



2.2 Impact of code switching in Saudi students' learning

Students benefit from code switching because it allows them to communicate and learn more. Furthermore, it is prompt because teachers do not waste time describing or seeking for easy sentences to clear up any confusion (Ehsan Namaziandost, 2019). Bilgin (2019) discovered that code-switching improved students' comprehension as well as Code switching during learning saved time and made students feel more confident. When compared to using only English, code switching helps low-performing students follow lessons better. It has reduced students' stress by relieving them of the need to worry about what they will say because they may turn to their mother if they are unsure how to pronounce something in English. Furthermore, the code switch aided in effective classroom management and the incorporation of ethics (Naha Dorcas Memory, 2018).

Simasiku (2015) noted that the use of mother tongue in English medium classrooms for language analysis, trying to present grammar rules, describing cross-cultural problems, providing orders or urges, trying to explain mistakes, and verifying for ability to comprehend is useful for more than just classroom management. Code-switching is defined as a tool that increases learner participation in the classroom, which is required for academic achievement and cognitive development (Simasiku, 2016). It is also portrayed as a resource that assists students in



understanding and comprehending their lessons, thereby improving their performance during examinations (Aljasir, 2020).

According to Domalewska (2015),

Switching the code in the language allows the student to retain the information for a longer period of time; information can also be retrieved faster. Furthermore, the student's cognitive structure is developed (pg. 7).

Ehsan Namaziandost (2019) asserted that students can reflect on their experiences, which helps them remember what they don't know when teachers use code-switching during lessons.

2.3 The function of code switching in learning

Many teachers, whether intentionally or unintentionally, switch from one language to another or from one dialect to another while teaching foreign languages (Aisha Bhatti, 2018). These kinds of code-switching serve certain functions beneficial in teaching and learning FL (Bilgin, 2019):

- **Topic Shift**

Teachers use their students' native language to help them understand the new language. These findings are consistent with the factors influencing code-switching among 15 bilingual university students. The



research results showed that the most important factor in code-switching was accurately conveying the meaning.

Some studies suggest that using students' basic knowledge with, or guidelines in, their mother tongue when introducing a new theme or clarification guidelines will improve their awareness of current language. This claim was supported by the work of the topic from the target language (English) to the students' mother tongue to clarify grammatical rules.

- **Affective Functions**

Certain emotions and attitudes are frequently expressed by teachers in another language. Teachers code-switched in adult EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia in order to foster a supportive language environment in the classroom. As a result, speakers may alter their language to express a variety of emotions.

Teachers use code-switching to share students' emotions, create a soft environment, and bridge the gap between teachers and students. Code switching is a helpful tool for improving English language proficiency because it reduces anxiety and improves the affective environment for learning, accounts for social factors, allows for the incorporation of learners' life experiences, and allows for learner-centered curriculum development.



- **Repetitive Functions**

Previous research has shown that code-switching can be used in situations where one word in either language is missing. Teachers translated or elaborated key points while explaining new vocabulary or grammar rules; as a result, code-switching allows teachers to convey precise meanings that maximize learning. As a result, teachers use code-switching to help students understand the meaning of lexical items. Besides that, code-switching is used by teachers to initiate the connections between new notions.

3. Methodology

In this section of the research, the researcher will describe the method and processes that will achieve the purpose of the study by providing both the study population, a sample and tools, and the following is a summary of that.

A sample of 120 secondary school teachers and students in Saudi Arabia will be selected to achieve the objectives of the study and answer its inquiries. This study will be conducted in the academic year (2021-2022), and this sample will be specially selected to collect the most accurate and reliable information on the subject of the study.

To complete this, a quantitative approach using a questionnaire tool will be used as the main method of the study. In addition, the SPSS analysis method will be used to obtain more accurate data, and the researcher will collect data by taking notes on the results. Finally, the results of the



study will be analyzed in order to investigate the impact of code switching on students learning in Saudi Arabia.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, code-switching benefits both students and teachers. It assists students in understanding difficult aspects of the lesson while also allowing them to participate in class. It also aids them in connecting their prior knowledge. It improves classroom management. Learners can also express themselves without fear of becoming stuck. Learners in rural areas struggle with English, so when they speak, they can translate difficult sentences into their mother tongue.

Recommendations

This study's recommendations are based on the findings of this article. As a result, the study's goal is to enlighten all stakeholders in the Ministry of Education, including directors, Education officers, teachers, learners, and the role of parents in their children's learning process, who are the most important stakeholders in improving learners' performance in whatever subject they learn. As a result, if these education stakeholders are aware of what is going on in schools, they will have a better chance of advising curriculum designers on what ground rules should be incorporated on the implementation of code-switching in teaching



English, providing teachers with clear guidelines on how to use code-switching in their lessons.

As a result, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education take the following steps to improve the implementation of code-switching in Saudi educational institutions:

- Curriculum developers should consider the use of English as a medium of instruction in the lower primary grades.
- Ground rules should be incorporated into the curriculum to provide teachers with clear guidance on whether or not to use code-switching.
- Examiners should also pay unexpected visits to teachers in rural areas, because teachers' attitudes tend to change when they know visitors are coming to the school. Language teachers should encourage their students to write correct spellings, play spelling games, and take dictations in order to help students improve their spelling and pronunciation of words in both Silozi and English.
- Teachers should not discontinue code-switching because it helps students understand difficult aspects of the lessons, allows students to express themselves, and aids teachers in classroom management.



- Code-switching should be reduced significantly as students' progress from grade 4 to grade 9, and it should not be used in grade 11. Although code-switching has a positive impact on English language learning and teaching, it should not be overused or misused.

The above recommendations from this study will assist stakeholders in effectively implementing the use of code switching. If curriculum designers include ground rules for how teachers should use code-switching in the teaching and learning processes, code-switching will undoubtedly become a good learning and teaching tool. Code-switching is used by teachers to code switch from English to mother tongue, but it is also used by mother tongue teachers to code switch from mother tongue to English to improve learners' comprehension.



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