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Title:

The Facilitative and Debilitative Role of Code-switching: Types, Functions and Gender

Preferences among Iranian EFL Teachers and Language Learners

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This thesis

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Was submitted to the English department of the University of Kashan in partial fulfillment of

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Declaration

Hereby, I declared the present study is the outcome of my own sincere endeavor and it is by no means polarized since the entire applied source and quotations have been reported completely in reference.

Zohre Jafari

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Abstract

Recently, the use of language learners' mother tongue, code-switching, alongside English in EFL classrooms has received considerable attention. The present study tried to focus on different aspects of code-switching. To this end, 50 hours of four class performances were observed, audio-recorded and analyzed to answer the proposed research questions. The findings of this study showed that doing activity was the moment in the classrooms when teachers and students applied code-switching more frequently. Also it was found that among three types of code-switching intersentential switching was applied the most. The main objective of this study was to investigate the functions of code-switching at intermediate English Proficiency level in EFL classrooms. The results of this study suggested that teachers applied code-switching more frequently when they tried   to give Persian equivalents of English words and expressions. Students, however, appealed to code-switching more frequently to give humorous remarks. Code-switching was more frequent while students were carrying out the assigned tasks. Male students switched when they said humorous remarks while their female classmates switched more frequently when they asked and/or gave L1 equivalents.   Filling in the attitude questionnaire, all teachers and the majority of students believed that neither teachers nor students should apply Persian as much as possible, even though it facilitated their interactions!

Key words: code-switching, type, function, classroom interactions, attitudes

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

English is taught in Iran schools mostly as a foreign language although there are already few schools offering teaching in English in subject studies as well. The Iranian Junior and high school pupils should learn English as their first foreign language at their school. By the time they finish their high school they have been studying English for seven years. As most of the pupils enter university, they should pass several courses in English. There are English courses which are obligatory to everyone; in addition, most universities offer optional language courses. As Persian is usually the mother tongue of both the teacher and the pupils, it is very likely that there will be situations during the lessons that Persian will be used instead of English; therefore, this is the starting point of the present thesis.

When discussing language classrooms, two terms are used to describe them: ESL and EFL classrooms. ESL is an acronym for English as a second language and EFL is an acronym for English as a foreign language. ESL classrooms mean that the second language (L2) serves as both the medium of instruction as well as the content of instruction, which means that the learner is expected to understand as well as communicate in L2. In EFL classrooms, in contrast, the learner learns the language in an environment where there is little natural use of the language. The latter situation applied to Iranian classroom where English is taught as a foreign language.

In EFL classrooms in Iran the teachers' aim is to teach the pupils English while the students' aim is to learn English by listening, reading and doing written and oral activities. The language of teaching is usually English. However, there are instances where the language changes from

English to Persian or vice versa. This phenomenon is called code-switching. What the researcher interested in the current study is the occurrences of code-switching in EFL classrooms; more specifically, the researcher wants to find out what kinds of functions of code-switching are applied in EFL classrooms, that is, how the teacher and the pupils use them.

During recent years the application of a third language in EFL classroom has received considerable attention. Besides mother tongue of students and the foreign language, especially English, a language composed of the combination of these two is applied in the classroom interaction; the process is called code-switching. Research has been done regarding the significance and influence of the application of code-switching in the EFL classroom interactions (e.g., Greggio and Gil (2007), Eldridge (1996), Merritt et al. (1992)). Their research has shown that the application of the third language was widespread and inevitable in many cases while language learners were learning a foreign language. Although they didn't make any comment about whether it should be used or not; in those studies the functions of code-switching were on the focus of attention.

Actually, the interest in this topic comes first of all from the fact that I will be an EFL teacher in the future, thus it is important for me to pay attention to and understand this phenomenon in the classrooms. I want to find out what is happening in the classrooms, whether the teachers and students are only using English, and if not, when is Persian used; the moment of the class in which it is used. Furthermore, it will be interesting to find out what types of code-switching is applied more by Iranian teachers and students. The function of code-switching in teachers' and students' speeches is one of the other aims of this study, and the more interesting part. I try to find whether Iranian teachers and students apply the same or different functions of code-switching in comparison to teachers and students around the world. I hope that by paying

attention to code-switching teachers and students can recognize it and justify their uses of English and Persian in the classroom. Secondly, spending TTC classes in two institutes, I saw that some instructors recommended not using Persian in the classroom even when teaching grammar, and others materials that one should use Persian to clarify things the pupils do not Understand it. While some other institutes allow their teachers to apply Persian in the classroom. In other words, there does not seem to be consistency in the usage of code-switching for using it in EFL classrooms in Iran. Thus, code-switching as a phenomenon in classrooms started to interest me. Hopefully the present study will help raise awareness on the issue of code-switching in the foreign language classrooms.

In order to find out about functions of code-switching, I will look at issues such as who in the classrooms apply code-switching; when code-switching is used during the lesson, as part of which activity; what types of code-switching occur in the classrooms; and gender preferences in the application of code-switching. I am interested in classroom interaction as a whole which means that both the teachers' and the students' code-switching are studied. The data of the present study consist of tape-recorded lessons; there are four classes. As mentioned there are earlier researches on code-switching in classrooms. However, most of those studies have been done in a bilingual setting, the focus being on English as a second language. In those cases, English is possibly one of the languages used in everyday encounters; furthermore, English is often used as a language of instruction in other school subjects as well. However, there is also some research on code-switching in foreign language classrooms, but little in Iran, maybe the first. In this sense, the present study will introduce new information about code-switching in EFL classrooms in Iran.

This study will fill the gap by shedding new light on the issue of code-switching, its occurrences in the foreign language classroom and on the things that are accomplished by applying code-switching, i.e. the functions of code-switching. The theory part of the present thesis consists of some major definitions of the term code-switching which is used differently by different researchers. Therefore, it is important to define how the present study sees the term code-switching. Secondly, different types of code-switching are introduced. Thirdly, the functions of Code-switching are looked at in more detail, in other words, what kinds of function categories have been found classroom discourse. Fourthly, how code-switching has been applied in language classrooms by different genders will be dealt with. Fifthly, as the context of the study is EFL classrooms, attitudes of teachers and students towards the application of code-switching in the classroom interactions will be reviewed.

1.2. Statement of the problem

There are several negative attitudes toward code-switching in the classroom interactions. Some researchers, for instance Lin (n.d.) believes that the use of code-switching has a negative effect on the language proficiency of the students because the application of the code-switching decreases the exposure of the students to authentic language. Hence, students are deprived of the necessary input which can finally lead to intake and the relevant output, that is, the actual use of language in genuine situations. The input they receive, it is claimed, is far from authentic due to the fact that the language produced by the native speakers is rarely ever a combination of two distinct languages. Into the bargain, appealing to code-switching practices and habits by teachers has negative effects on evaluation procedures. With respect to the assessment of oral presentation, the application of code-switching negatively influences the scoring procedure and

undermines its reliability. Moreover, in classes with students from heterogeneous ethnic backgrounds, frequent occurrence of code-switching is to the advantage of some students and to the disadvantage of some others. This situation might lead to unfavorable situations such as lack of motivation, interest, self-esteem, and even feelings of frustration and disillusionment on the side of the excluded students. So the question is whether students should be urged not to use their mother tongue in the classroom interactions to increase the possibility of speaking and practicing English.

1.3. Objectives of the study

In recent years, code-switching in academic situation received considerable attentions but not in comprehensive ways. There is a need to cover more aspects of code-switching in one study; not just trying to find the functions of code-switching. It is expected that the present study will focus on who use code-switching in the classroom interactions; also the types of code-switching in their speech. Moreover this study aims to find is there any moment in the classroom interactions that the use of code-switching is more frequent than other moment. Transcribing the speech of the students we will tried to categorize the functions of the code-switching in Iranian language learners. Finally the gender difference in the frequent use of code-switching will be investigated.

1.3.1. Research questions

The main purpose of this study is to find and categorize different functions of code-switching applied in the classroom interactions by both teachers and students, as well as to find whether there is any gender preference in the application of those functions. In this study the following research questions are used as the focus for data analysis:

1. What are the moments when there are frequent uses of code-switching?

2. What are the types of code-switching observed in teachers' and students' interactions in EFL classrooms?

3. What are the functions of code-switching in teachers' and students' interaction?

4. What are the gender differences in the use of different functions of code-switching?

5. What are teachers' and students' attitudes towards code-switching?

1.4 . Significant of the study

Research on code switching would enhance our understanding of the demands of the learning situation in the foreign language classroom. So it can also enhance our understanding of the methods of teaching and strategies of teaching in the classroom. If we know what the types of code-switching are and why language learners use them (their functions) we would be able to cater to the needs of the students in terms of the provision of authentic and pragmatically appropriate discourse. The findings of this study can benefit EFL teachers, materials developers, policy makers, assessment specialists and EFL students at the universities and language schools all over the country. The results of this study can benefits EFL teachers, materials developers,

policy makers, and assessment specialists in the way it can help them to understand whether the use of code-switching should be in their focus of attention or not. Moreover, in context of the classroom they consider a place for the application of the classroom. Also, they can understand the needs of the students and language learners to speak Persian in different moments of the classroom for better understanding. Language learners are another group who can benefit from this study in the way that the decisions of the first group has direct effects for their learning progress; so, whether they are allowed to apply code-switching in the classroom or not may has considerable effects on their learning.

1.5. Definition of key terms

Code-switching has been defined in a number of ways by different researchers over time, depending on the point of view of their study. Sometimes the terminology overlaps and sometimes the terminology is used differently by different researchers (Milroy and Myusken 1995: 12).

If we want to define the expression code-switching in a simple way, we can say that code-switching means 'alternative use of two codes or more in bilingual situation'. But from more sophisticated view code-switching can be defined in various ways depending on which perspective the researcher chooses to use in examination of the language switching; as there are different definitions of code-switching.

Tag-switching (or *emblematic switching*) occurs when a speaker inserts a tag statement from one language into another language.

Intersentential switching consists of language switches at phrasal, sentence, or discourse boundaries.

Intrasentential switching involves a shift in language in the middle of a sentence, usually performed without pause, interruption or hesitation.

Function of code-switching means the reason of code-switching, why, on that case of application.

Here are more sophisticated definitions of code-switching proposed by key figures in researches about code-switching. Gumperz (1982) referred to code-switching as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems".

Hudson (2000) characterized code-switching as "switching from one language to another language within which a single speech situation is called code-switching, a phenomenon which characterizes the sociolect of bilingual speech communities; the member of which have grammatical competence to code-switching when speaking to one another." He believed that some occasions of code-switching may be necessitated by speakers' lesser degree of grammatical competence in one on the languages. Milroy and Myusken (1995) defined the term as "the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation".

Stavans and swisher (2006) believed that "code-switching refers to the mixing of various linguistic units (words, phrases, clauses and sentences) primarily from two participating grammatical systems across sentence boundaries within a speech event. In other words, code-switching is intersentential and may be subject to some discourse principles. It is motivated by

social and psychological motivations." As we can see they equated code-switching with intrasentential switching, which we consider to be a type of code-switching.

Cook's (1991) definition for code-switching was: "going from one language to the other in mid speech when both speakers know the same two languages". Halliday (1975) viewed code switching as fulfilling the interpersonal function of communication. For him the mixed language spoken plays the role of a mediator. In other words, it is the use of language to act as a mediator between self and participants in the communicative event.

Myers-Scotton (1993b) defined code-switching as "the selection by bilinguals/ multilinguals of forms from two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation". Auer (1988) used language alternation as a cover term for this phenomenon. He divided cases of language alternation into two categories: code-switching and transfer. Code-switching, for him, referred to language alternation that is connected to a particular point in conversation whereas transfers are connected to particular conversational structures.

Fromkin (2006) et al defined code-switching, a universal language-contact phenomenon, as "the movement back and forth between two languages dialects within the same sentence or discourse," which "reflects the grammar of both languages working simultaneously". They added it also can "occur whenever there are groups of bilinguals who speak the two same languages." Moreover they mentioned that "code-switching occurs in specific social situations, enriching the repertoire of the speakers." Finally, Fasold (2006) defines it as "intended use of more than one language for symbolic, strategic, or communicative purpose by bilinguals."

As we see there are various definitions with different focuses for the code-switching; as well as different ways for describing the related terminologies to code-switching. This diversity in definition causes diversity in the focus of attention.

CHAPTER TWO:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overall view of the history and related subjects to code-switching. Accordingly, the chapter consists of the history of the researchers' focus on the application of code-switching in different contexts, and some theoretical concepts related to the code-switching, as well as the key terms related to the present study. As you can see there are varieties of focus on the application of code-switching which make code-switching a wide field for the study.

2.2. History of Code-switching

Maybe the start point of researching on the application of code-switching can be found on the works of George Barker. One of the earliest American studies in linguistic anthropology to deal with issues of language choice and code switching; George Barker's (1947) description of language use among Mexican Americans in Tucson, Arizona. Barker tried to analyze the economic relations, social networks, and social geography of Tucson residents, as well as seeking to answer the question, "How does it happen, for example, that among bilinguals, the ancestral language will be used on one occasion and English on another, and that on certain occasions bilinguals will alternate, without apparent cause, from one language to another?" (Barker 1947:185-86)

Barker suggested a continuum between intimate family relationships, extending through increasingly public situations, to formal interaction with

English speaking neighbors. He found that interactions among family members were most likely to be conducted in Spanish, while formal talk with Anglo-Americans was most

likely to use the medium of English (even when all parties in the interaction were able to understand Spanish). At intermediate points along the scale, language choice was less fixed, and elements from each language could occur. Furthermore, Barker proposed that younger people were more apt to use multiple languages in a single interaction than were their elders, and that the use of multiple varieties was constitutive of a local Tucson identity.

Barker's work suggested strong links between language and identity. For example, Barker hypothesized, "for individuals both inside and outside the ethnic group, the ethnic language comes to symbolize the group and its cultural background, or in terms of its social function, to identify the group as a group" (Barker 1947:186). Therefore, he reasoned that the use of Mexican Spanish functioned as an important marker of Mexican American identity for Tucson residents. At the same time, residents used English to assert an American identity. Barker wrote, "The individual's skill in using the language of a second or adopted culture comes to symbolize his status in the new society (Barker 1947 187). Finally, Barker found that it was common for younger people born in Tucson to use both English and Spanish. Barker's study of the social functions of multiple linguistic varieties thus anticipates later descriptions of code switching, social networks, and language and identity.

2.2.1. Weinreich's Bilingual Model

Another important base in code-switching research in the field of linguistics is Uriel Weinreich's (1953) *Languages in Contact*. Weinreich called the applied switching between codes bilingual speakers' "switching faculty" (Alvarez-Cáccamo 1998). Weinreich was interested to describe the effect of language contact on languages, as well