







A study of code switching utilized by Iraqi University professors

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APA Citation:

Bairmani, H. K., Fadhil, W. N., Dehham, S. H., & Chiad, M. O. (2022). A study of code switching utilized by Iraqi University professors. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 18(Special Issue 1), 511-518.

Submission Date:31/07/2021

Acceptance Date:02/10/2021

Abstract

The present study aims at exploring whether Iraqi university professors utilize code switching or not, finding out the most common reason and the least one for utilizing code switching, and showing whether there are any difference between professors of linguistics and those of literature in terms of their use of CS. To achieve the aims of the study, the researchers utilize two instruments of data collection: checklist and observation. The checklist consists of eleven reasons of using code switching introduced by Gulzar (2010) showing where do professors code switch. The study also analyzes the observations that have shown that the participants of both universities employed code switching during teaching. The aim of code switching is transferring the materials in an understandable and effective way. Qualitative and quantitative research design methodology is used to achieve the aim of the present study.

Keywords: code switching; english language; linguistics; professors; teaching

1. Introduction

People use a particular code whenever they communicate. For one reason or another, they may switch from one code to another. This phenomenon is known as code switching. According to Numan and Carter (2001: 75), code switching (henceforth CS) is “a phenomenon of switching from one language to another in the same discourse”. It exists in bilingual and multilingual societies as monolinguals cannot switch code since they speak and understand only one language. (Cook, 2013)

This phenomenon is common in educational contexts. Cook (2013) and Timor (2012) say that the use of mother tongue must be integrated into the activities which are used to facilitate teaching the foreign language. This point is emphasized by Setati and Adler (2000: 243-44) when they say that “CS entails switching by the teacher and/or learners between the language of learning and teaching and the learners' main language”. Furthermore, the majority of CS in the classroom has a clear purpose and is tied to pedagogical objectives. This means that CS is inevitable in the class especially in case the teachers and the learners share the same language.

In Iraqi society, Arabic, being spoken by the vast majority of Iraqi people, is the main language of the country. English is a means of communication. It has important position in every aspect of life for

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it is an international language. Besides that, it is used as a medium of instruction in Iraqi universities in general and college of Education for Human sciences in particular. Thus, teaching the materials in English language will affect the students efficiency especially when the materials being taught are beyond the level of the learners. This means that code switching must be welcomed in Iraqi classes providing that its frequency is not excessive. Gulzar (2010) explains different reasons for the sake of professors' use of code switching such as clarification, translation of a new topic. The current paper tries to justify the following:

- 1- Do professors of Kerbala University and Baghdad University utilize CS in EFL interaction?
- 2- What are the most common reason and the least one for professors' use of CS?
- 3- Are there any differences between professors of Linguistics and literature in terms of their use of CS?

1.1. Aims of the Study

This study aims at:

- 1- Investigating whether Iraqi University Professors utilize CS or not.
- 2- Finding out the most common reason and the least one for professors' use of CS
- 3- Investigating whether there any differences between professors of Linguistics and Literature in terms of their use of CS.

1.2. Limits of the Study

This study is limited to:

- 1- Professors of Linguistics and Literature at University of Baghdad and University of Kerbala
- 2- Eleven reasons of using CS presented by Gulzar (2010)

1.3. Significance of the Study

The study gives an accurate picture on the nature, types, and why CS is utilized in the classroom interaction. Moreover, professors will put emphasis on each act of CS and attempt to follow the same hierarchy of reasons for the sake of being entirely understood. Finally, this study is also considered as a platform for other researchers to explore new aspects of CS as an effective tool in accelerating language learning.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Concept of Code Switching

Different scholars defined the term code switching. Gumperz (1977) is considered one of the pioneers of this term and provides the following definition “the juxtaposition of passages of speech belonging to different grammatical systems or subsystems within the same exchange” (ibid:1) According to Van Herk (2012: 199) “code switching refers to instances in which people alternate between at least two languages or language varieties in a single conversation”. Moreno, Federmeier, and Kutas (2002: 189) say that code switching is “a change in language form, with the same meaning conveyed using a more available word that happens to be from the other language”.

2.2. Types of Code Switching

1- Tag switching: This kind includes the addition of a tag or a brief statement in one speech, such as language forms or fillers (such as You know or I mean), to an utterance in another language, as in “mabaHibbha”, “you know”. “I don’t like it, you know” (Romaine, 1995: 122) “Because tags have no syntactic restrictions, they may be moved freely and placed anywhere in an utterance without violating any grammatical rules”. Poplack (1980: 589) confirms this by stating that the addition of a tag to an utterance has no effect on the rest of the phrase.

2- Inter sentential switching, according to Romaine (1995: 122), occurs between clauses or phrases in which each clause or sentence is written in a different language. As a result, it requires the least amount of integration, as I occasionally begin and end a remark in Spanish. (Every now and then, I’ll start a phrase in Spanish and finish it in Spanish.) Poplack is a slang term for a (1980: 594)

3- Intra sentential switching is considered to be the most difficult sort of switching. It can happen within a clause containing a phrase, a single word, or even across morphemes. It necessitates a substantial amount of effort. It’s usually associated with the most proficient bilinguals (ibid) because words or phrases from another language are combined into a single sentence in the native language, it also provides the greatest syntactic risk. Furthermore, in order to make grammatically accurate statements and prevent ungrammatical ones, the speaker must be familiar with two separate grammars. Is word ka is se koi connection (taaluk) nai, for example (This word has no relation with that word).

2.3 Reasons for Teachers' Use of Code Switching

Gulzar (2010) mentions eleven reasons behind professors' use of CS. These are stated as follows:

1- Clarification

Professors switch code to clarify the points whenever they encounter unfamiliar vocabulary or difficult expression. It is clarification of meaning makes the process of CS more effective in classroom interaction. (Sert, 2005)

2- Ease of Expression

Professors may switch code because the vocabularies which are found in the first L are easier than those in the target L. By using this function, the knowledge will be transferred and the materials will be understood. Thus, the professor fulfils his / her aim.

3- Emphasis

When there are some points which need emphasis, professors make code switching whether consciously or unconsciously so as to convey them effectively and properly. Eldridge (1996: 303) says that “messages are reinforced; emphasized or clarified where the messages have already been transmitted in one code but not understood”.

4- Repetitive Functions

In repetitive function, professors use the target L and then repeat what is said in the first L. Mattsson and Burenhult (1999: 11) illustrate repetitive function as “the repetition in the first L can be partial or full and is often expanded with further information, but more frequently CS is used as a repetition of the previously uttered sentences”.

5- Socializing

Code switching can be employed to build a good relationship with the students and this, in turn, encourages the students to learn a foreign language.

6- Translation

Translation is another reason for professors' use of code switching. Gulzar (2010: 31) illustrates this point “teachers often switch their code to translate or elaborate the important message during the process of explaining new vocabulary, grammar points or instructions instead of continuing in the foreign language”.

7- Linguistic Competence

According to Mattsson and Burenhult (1999), linguistic competence in a classroom interaction is a complex reason. As we know, the responsibility of the professors is to convey knowledge of a foreign language to the students. Thus it is not suitable to use words for which they switch code to take control on. This might damage the students' confidence in the teacher's proficiency of the foreign language. This means that the professors have to avoid using such words or restructure the utterance.

8- Checking understanding

Mattsson and Burenhult (ibid) state that the main reason for teacher's code switching to the first language is to make the students understand their utterances. Gumperz (1982) and Brice (2000) emphasize the importance of the function of repetition in CS for checking understanding.

9- Giving instructions effectively

It is a common phenomenon that the professor switches the code to the student's first language whenever there are some instructions in order to convey what he/she wants in an effective way.

10- Topic shift

Code switching for topic shift is also a common phenomenon in classroom interaction. Mattsson and Burenhult (1999) give two reasons for switching the code. Either the message is so important that the teacher doesn't want misinterpretation or the teacher wants to get the attention of the students.

11- Create sense of belonging

Code flipping, according to Lin (2013: 202) and Jingxia (2010: 21), is utilized to foster a tight interaction between teachers and pupils. As a result, professors like CS when they wish to create rapport and intimacy with their students, and students feel relaxed and at ease as a result. Furthermore, when CS is allowed, they believe classroom engagement to be more natural and simple. (Cook, 2001: 413) By using this function the students understand faster and more thoroughly.

3. Methodology

Following qualitative and quantitative research design, the present study aims at exploring whether Iraqi university professors utilize code switching or not, finding out the most common reason and the least one for utilizing code switching, and showing whether there are any difference between professors of linguistics and those of literature in terms of their use of CS.

3.1. Instrument of the Study

To achieve the aims of the study, the researchers utilize two instruments of data collection: checklist and observation. The checklist consists of eleven reasons of using code switching introduced by Gulzar (2010) showing where do professors code switch.

3.2. Participants of the Study

The participants in this study were 15 professors of English as a foreign language from each one of two universities named university of Baghdad and university of Kerbala where Iraqi students were

learning English in the English department and, thus, they were going to be teachers of English. These professors were selected as all of them had MA and PH.D in English linguistics and literature. They, also, had Arabic language as their mother tongue and they had more than five years of teaching experience in teaching EFL.

Each participant was observed while he/she was teaching in their classrooms taking into consideration the eleventh reasons of CS proposed by Gulzar (2010). Data was collected through observation of classroom teaching.

4. Findings and Discussion

Analysis of the observations has shown that the participants of both universities employed code switching during teaching. The reason for each act of CS, i.e, clarification, giving instructions effectively, etc., and how many times it is done are listed in the following table & chart.

Table 1. Iraqi university professors frequencies of using code switching. (by the authors)

Reasons	count & %			Total
		Linguistics	Literature	
Clarification	Count	11	14	25
	% horezantel	44.0%	56.0%	100.0%
	%vertical	16.7%	16.3%	16.4%
Ease of Expression	Count	10	13	23
	% horezantel	43.5%	56.5%	100.0%
	%vertical	15.2%	15.1%	15.1%
Emphasis	Count	6	7	13
	% horezantel	46.2%	53.8%	100.0%
	%vertical	9.1%	8.1%	8.6%
Repetitive Functions	Count	4	5	9
	% horezantel	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%
	%vertical	6.1%	5.8%	5.9%
Socializing	Count	5	8	13
	% horezantel	38.5%	61.5%	100.0%
	%vertical	7.6%	9.3%	8.6%
Translation	Count	8	9	17
	% horezantel	47.1%	52.9%	100.0%
	%vertical	12.1%	10.5%	11.2%
Linguistic Competence	Count	1	1	2
	% horezantel	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	%vertical	1.5%	1.2%	1.3%
Checking understanding	Count	3	4	7
	% horezantel	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
	%vertical	4.5%	4.7%	4.6%
Giving instructions effectively	Count	9	12	21
	% horezantel	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
	%vertical	13.6%	14.0%	13.8%
Topic shift	Count	7	10	17
	% horezantel	41.2%	58.8%	100.0%
	%vertical	10.6%	11.6%	11.2%
Create sense of belonging	Count	2	3	5
	% horezantel	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
	%vertical	3.0%	3.5%	3.3%
total	Count	66	86	152
	% horezantel	43.4%	56.6%	100.0%
	%vertical	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

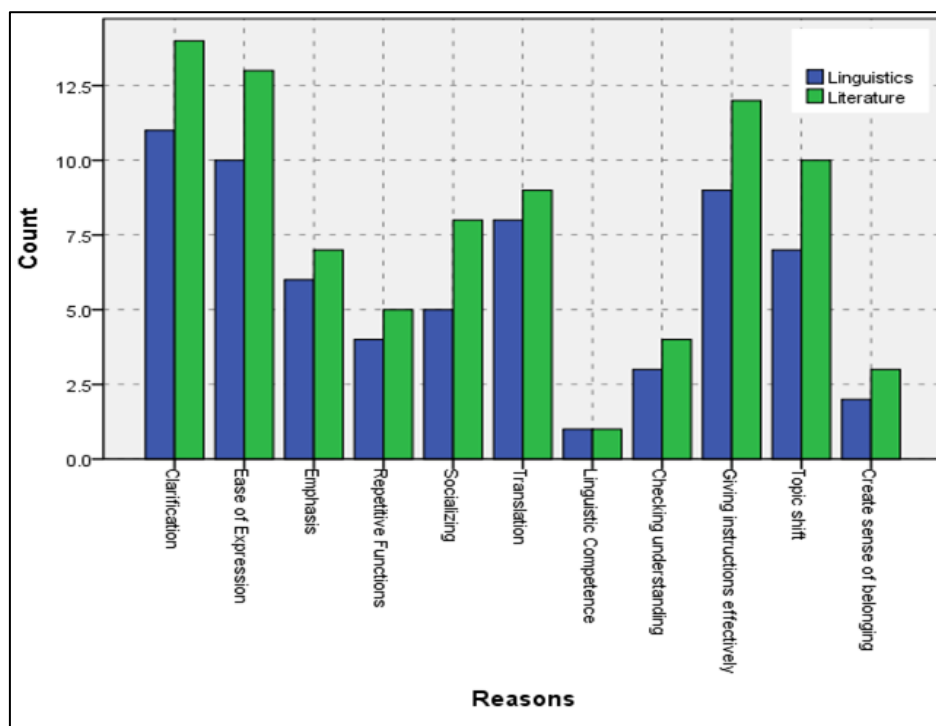


Chart 1. Iraqi university professors frequencies of using code switching. (by the authors)

Clarification is ranked top because data indicates that it is the most reasonable excuse for teachers of English as a foreign language to utilize their first language to help students understand confusing concepts. Professors mostly utilize second language, but transfer the code into first language whenever the necessity arises.

Easiness of expressions available in the first language is another important reason for switching the code as the aim of CS is transferring the materials in an understandable and effective way. Thus, it comes in the second rank.

Giving instructions effectively is also another reason of high importance which comes in the third rank as it is common for professors to switch the code into the students' first language whenever there are some instructions.

Professors employ CS to translate the sential message conveyed during the explanation of new vocabulary and grammatical elements. (Gulzar, 2010: 31) Thus, it is used in the fourth rank. This function is beneficial for the students as it reduces the comprehension burden and helps them to focus on the gist of the message conveyed.

Professors alter his/ her language into the first language at topic shift in the classroom especially in teaching grammar as the materials should be understood and sometimes it is difficult to explain the materials in the foreign language. Therefore, CS at topic shift occupies the fifth rank.

Another important reason for professors' use of CS is emphasis which occurs in the sixth rank and which is utilized to convey the message effectively and properly. This agrees with Eldridge (1996: 303) when he says that "messages are reinforced, emphasized or clarified where the messages have already been transmitted in one code but not understood".

Professors alter their code for socializing purposes. Thus, socializing occurs in the seventh rank. They tend to build a good rapport and friendship with the students and this, in turn, creates a sense of relief for the students to learn a new language even if the materials are difficult.

The professors repeat the speech in the first language which is commonly preceded by the target language. Thus, the meanings are aligned in two different languages. This means professors utilize CS for repetition since it occupies the eighth rank.

Checking comprehension of the students is another important reason for professors' use of CS. It occurs in the ninth rank. This function is also utilized as a benchmark for determining the level of the students' understanding of the material and how much his/her method is successful in teaching. Moreover, Gumperz (1982) and Brice (2000) put emphasis on the function of reiteration solely for checking understanding.

Professors code switch their language to express such feeling as if he/she was one of them. With this sense, CS contributes to create a supportive language environment in the classroom.

The professors are specialists in English, though they are non- native speakers of English, and they had experience in teaching. Thus, CS for linguistic competence is the least reason utilized by those professors.

The table also shows that both professors of linguistics and literature utilize CS for the same reasons whether, clarification, easiness of expressions, etc.

5. Conclusions

This study reveals that code switching has much value in accelerating foreign language learning and especially when it is utilized with purpose and awareness for which reason it is employed for.

According to the results of the study, it is found out that CS is utilized for various reasons regardless of the topic being taught. The most common reason for professors' use of CS of both specialization (linguistics and literature) is clarification as it is important to clarify unknown concepts whenever the students encounter them whereas the least reason for professors' use of CS is linguistic competence as the professors are specialists in language teaching. However, whatever the reason for which CS is utilized, all of these reasons help transfer the materials in an effective way and easily understood. This is emphasized by Wardhaugh (1992) when he says that CS has the power to facilitate greater understanding and to involve and cohere the entire classroom population in the lesson.

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