



Teaching English Through Code-Switching: A Study Of Teacher Strategies And Motivations For Successful Class Room Interaction

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Abstract:

This research aims to examine the perspectives of English language instructors about the use of code-switching in the classroom. This research investigates the purposes of code-switching instructors use in an English as a Second language (ESL) setting. Additionally, the study examines how teachers modify their code-switching techniques in response to the competency levels of their students. Researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors in India to collect data on English language instructors' perspectives on using credentials and experience levels. The data analysis identified five prevalent functions via which instructors used code-switching in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. The research indicated that instructors mostly used code-switching to prevent misunderstandings during interactions with pupils. Furthermore, educators had a greater propensity to use code flipping when interacting with students with limited language skills. The primary determinants of instructors' code-switching in these instances where the English competence of the learners and the need to prevent misinterpretations. On the other hand, while working with advanced learners, instructors mostly used code-switching to establish a good relationship. This research explores the underlying motives for code-switching, a phenomenon that has been neglected in English as a Second Language (ESL).

Keywords: Code-Switching; English Language Classes; learners' Proficiency; Teacher-Student Interaction.

1. Introduction

The usage of code-switching has increased due to the growth of contemporary societies, interethnic contact, and globalisation.^[1] Code-switching, to put it simply, is the practice of instructors and students using two languages simultaneously in the classroom.^[2] Code-switching, as defined by Rahayu and Margana (2018),^[3] is the frequency with which bilinguals' transition between two languages in various forms, such as words, phrases, or sentences. Given this, different scholars have put forward many definitions of code-switching. Code-switching is defined by Mustak et.al., (2016)^[4] as a linguistic activity in which a speaker switches to a different language. This transition may occur when a speaker begins in one language and switches to another in the midst of their discourse. Code-switching is defined as concurrently or interchangeably switching between two or more languages during a discussion by Azlan and Narasu man (2013).^[5] According to Fachiriyah (2017),^[6] code-switching is a technique used by many multilingual announcers for communication purposes.

Scholars have seen code-switching, which first gained attention in the 1980s, as both beneficial and aversive.^[7-10] Consequently, there needs to be more consensus among scholars about code-switching. The notion of code-switching in the classroom is supported by researchers such as Skinner (1985),^[11] who argue that its eradication may have a detrimental impact on the development of mental conceptions. For example, Skinner (1985, p. 383)^[12] contends that since it "obstructs the quick connection of words with thoughts, and thereby it slows acquisition of meaning in the second language," "the sole use of the second language as the language of instruction appears to inhibit that process." Additionally, according to Skinner, learners' ideas and thoughts are pre-developed in their native language; therefore, eliminating them stops them from conceptually developing. Code-switching has been shown to help learners' cognitive demands and growth in ESL classrooms, according to studies like Mart (2013)^[13] and Rojas et al. (2016).^[14] Based on the demands and cognitive development of the learners, these studies highlight the significance of deliberate and prudent code-switching, indicating that language learners may profit from it without it obstructing the development of mental conceptions.

However, some research, like Nguyen (2014)^[15] and Llanes (1979)^[16] studies, has highlighted concerns over the possible negative effects of needless code-switching in language learning programs. They contend that improper use of code-switching may result in subtractive bilingualism when students are deprived of the opportunity to practice their native tongue in the classroom, which can be seen as a sign of the teacher's low language competency.^[17-19] These contradictory results demonstrate the intricacy of the problem and the want for further investigation to determine the circumstances in which code-switching in language learning environments might be advantageous or disadvantageous. There are certain areas where the current study and earlier research diverge. This research investigates instructors' opinions on code-switching in EFL classrooms while also taking language proficiency into account.

2. Literature review

In multilingual and multicultural settings, code-switching—the act of switching between languages—is a frequent occurrence.^{[20][21]} In the topic of multilingual speech behavior, it has been extensively researched and discussed.^[22] The argument over learning a language exclusively in the target language has existed since the 1880s.^[23] The use of the learners' native tongue in the classroom is discouraged by many language teaching techniques, including the direct approach, Audio-lingual approach, Total Physical Response, and Natural Approach.^{[24][25]} The English-only policy, which is the foundation of the L2-only classroom method, places a strong emphasis on using English and excluding the learners' native tongue.

However, studies indicate that there are three primary purposes for which instructors use code-switching in the classroom: emotional functions, classroom control, and explanation of difficult topics.^[26-29] Teachers use code-switching to make the material more approachable and to assist students in understanding the foreign language.^[30] Code-switching is also used as a management strategy in the classroom, a behaviour control tactic, and to keep the class moving.^{[31][32]} Additionally, the tactic increases learners' involvement and grabs their attention.^[33]

Many academics contend that code-switching may be an effective teaching and learning tactic for languages.^{[34][35]} Cook (2000)^[36] and Stern (1992)^[37] advocate for teaching students in foreign language schools in their mother tongue. While Stern offers a cross-lingual method that acknowledges the importance of both the first and target languages in language acquisition, Cook pushes for a humanistic approach that gives students greater freedom to express themselves.

Despite the historical controversy, code-switching helps with understanding, classroom management, and student involvement, among other things in language classes. Scholars who advocate the use of the

first language in foreign language acquisition.^{[38][39]} Puspavathi (2018)^[40] see it as a useful instrument for language instruction.

Further studies that concentrate on the particular context of code-switching in English language classrooms are required in order to add significant knowledge to the body of literature on the topic of code-switching in language learning environments.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Thirty English as a second language teacher from twenty Telangana Tribal Welfare Residential Degree Colleges in Telangana, India—fifteen male and fifteen females—participated in this research. Age, gender, educational attainment, subject of study, and prior teaching experience were taken into consideration while choosing the participants. The participants' ages ranged from 25 to 45 years old. The individuals' levels of schooling varied. The participants' areas of study included English translation, English teaching, and English literature. The participants' combined total teaching experience did not exceed ten years. The fact that the participants consented to take part in the research indicates that they were open to discussing their opinions and experiences with code-switching in L2 courses. The participants' varied backgrounds and teaching experiences, as well as the fact that they attended several private language schools, may have given rise to a variety of viewpoints on the use of code-switching in L2 instruction. The research included a heterogeneous cohort of Indian EFL instructors with differing educational backgrounds and experiences.

3.2. Data collection

It was necessary to carefully code and read over the acquired data many times in order to conduct an interview analysis of qualitative data. The focus of the interview was on how participants saw code-switching. Four sessions comprised the arrangement of the interview questions: In the first session, the researcher inquired about the participants' backgrounds and got their permission where needed. We also briefed the participants about the study's general goal and scope. In the second session, we looked at the L2 instructors' code-switching tactics and the justification for using them. The Researcher questioned instructors about when they use code-switching in L2 classrooms in session 3, and the researcher investigated the impact of students' language proficiency on teachers' use of code-switching in L2 classes in session 4. The data were evaluated qualitatively using Braun and Clarke's (2006)^[41] thematic approach.

The fifteen minutes or so that each interview lasted were taped and then transcribed for further examination. After conducting interviews and going over the transcripts once, the researchers divided the material into main topics. The common semantic information was then analysed to create themes and dimensions. During the last stage of selective coding, the objective was to create connections between codes to determine the core themes found in the data. Two helpers independently divided the anonymous open-ended responses into belief groups and produced a thorough written explanation for every group. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using the encoded responses, with a minimum goal of 80% agreement.

Table-1: Code-switching functions identified from the interview data.

Code Switching Functions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Preventing misunderstanding	24	32

Compensating for the learner's lack of competency	21	28
Adding emphasis	14	18.66
Developing rapport	10	13.34
Elucidating cultural concepts	6	8
Total	75	100

Source: Field Study

4. Results:

This section presents and analyses the data pertaining to instructors' code-switching functions. This research investigates pertinent concerns, such as the instructors' assessed inclination towards code-switching, which is derived from interviews. The inclusion of the instructors' experiences & their personal or cultural remarks (as shown in various excerpts in this part) enhances the usefulness of the data analysis. Table 1 displays the results of the theme analysis conducted on the interview data.

Table 1 displays the frequency of various functions discussed by instructors throughout their interviews. According to the data shown in Table 1, 32% of the instructors who utilized code-switching in various settings said that they did so to prevent misunderstandings. Additionally, 28% of the code-switching seen in the data was attributed to the learners' lack of proficiency in their second language (L2). The subsequent most prevalent purposes are enhancing focus (18.66%), establishing rapport (13.34%), and conveying cultural notions (8%) in sequential order. According to the information shown in Table 1, instructors reported several reasons for using code-switching in their interactions. Among instructors' replies, some roles stand out, with the largest frequency being the avoidance of misunderstandings. In the following section, each component is clearly stated, and pertinent snippets are shown for these functions.

4.1.Preventing Misunderstanding:

Communication inside the classroom might quickly get confused or go off track. The interviews revealed that instructors engaged in codeswitching to prevent miscommunication when discussing their objectives clearly or when providing more explanations on previously discussed topics in order to lessen the cognitive load on the learners. The majority of teachers reported using codeswitching as a means to prevent miscommunication when learners were unfamiliar with certain English words or phrases, particularly in relation to abstract vocabulary, skills such as confidence, self-esteem, globalization, and so on. Individuals with lower skill in their second language (L2) may have difficulties while attempting to produce or understand certain words or grammatical structures in the target language. Consequently, instructors used the L1 counterpart of a specific lexical item, transitioning to the learners' mother tongue while speaking in the foreign language. Below is a teacher's comment:

Excerpt-1

I use code-switching as a strategy when I ascertain that my pupils are unable to comprehend my explanations of new vocabulary via the use of narratives, gestures, illustrations, or providing alternative terms. Indeed, I believe that the manner in which knowledge is conveyed to pupils ought to be comprehensible to them.

4.2.Compensating for the learner's lack of competency

In the context of L2 learning, lack of competence refers to the insufficient competency of learners in using language abilities to effectively engage in educational settings. A number of teachers contended

that pupils lacked sufficient English proficiency. Put, individuals lack sufficient skill in their second language (L2). Furthermore, the insufficient proficiency of learners in their second language (L2) is identified as the primary cause for instructors resorting to code-switching. Below is a remark provided by one of the teachers:

Excerpt-2

When I encounter a student, who is unwilling to engage in conversations or interact with peers owing to limited skill in the target language, I make use of codeswitching as a strategy to facilitate their improvement in the target language by active participation in discussions & interactions with classmates.

4.3.Adding Emphasis:

Emphasizing is the act of directing learners' attention to certain language objects and ideas, highlighting their significance. Teachers used code-switching as a means to highlight the essential concepts throughout a subsequent task. This function involves instructors using code-switching in 18.66% of cases. Here is an example of an excerpt:

Excerpt-3

Typically, I teach my students in English, but this does not mean that I never utilize Telugu. The L1/L2 shift is dependent on the characteristics of my class. For example, in a speaking class, I consistently strive to engage with the learners using the English language. However, in a grammar session, such as when teaching conditionals, I may use Telugu to accentuate the intricate language rules, particularly those that do not exist in the learners' mother tongue.

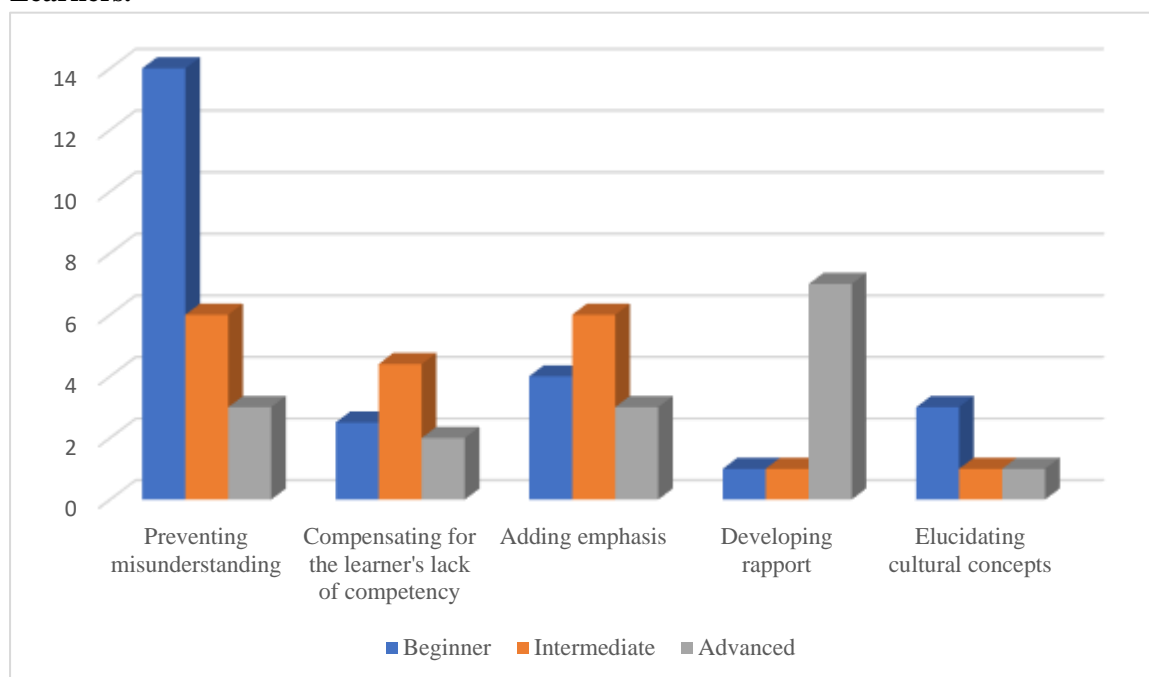
4.4.Developing Rapport:

Building rapport involves engaging in actions or using words to enhance connections or decrease emotional barriers. According to this survey, 13.34% of the instructors identified establishing rapport as the rationale for code-switching. Several instructors highlighted the significance of this issue while transitioning from the second language (L2) to the learners' first language (L1). Here is an example provided by one of the instructors:

Excerpt-4

I use code-switching in many contexts. Precisely, I use code-switching as a deliberate strategy to alter the atmosphere of the class, such as by recounting personal anecdotes or delivering humorous jokes. Delivering jokes in one's own language is more amusing and captivating. Employing the primary language in this context fosters a stronger rapport with pupils and imbues them with vitality. During breaks, instructors have the opportunity to communicate with their pupils using their mother tongue.

Figure-1: The Distribution of Code-Switching Cases According to the Competency Level of the Learners.



Source: Field study

4.5 Elucidating cultural concepts

Teachers who are culturally oriented are very conscious of the varied cultural backgrounds that exist in their classrooms. They play an active role in addressing cultural problems that are important to their students' backgrounds and cultures. Cultural notions refer to the recognized practices and customarily established behaviours that a group share. Cultural conceptions include a range of elements such as beliefs, spirituality, language, lifestyles, social connections, and personal identity. Teachers may use code-switching as a means to address cultural disparities and difficulties in cultural comprehension among learners. Approximately 8% of the instructors reported using code-switching as a means of elucidating cultural notions. Here is an example provided by one of the instructors:

Excerpt-5

Occasionally, I find it necessary to use the student's first language throughout the instructional procedure. This is particularly useful when I need to elucidate certain cultural elements in the second language, such as rituals and traditions. Due to the lack of prior knowledge among students, L2 cultural notions may not be easily understandable to them.

Eventually, the research identified five universal purposes for which instructors used code-switching in L2 classrooms. The predominant purpose of code-switching was to prevent miscommunication, constituting 32% of the cases. Figure 1 illustrates the general distribution of code-switching occurrences that are suitable for learners' level of skill.

Code-switching is used in accordance with the learners' requirements and level of language skill, as indicated by the teacher's remark. At an advanced level, learners exhibit reduced error rates and possess a greater understanding of the second language (L2). Consequently, the occurrence of code-switching in the classroom is likely minimal. Teachers may argue that the use of code-switching is less necessary for learners who have a greater level of language competency since they have less difficulty in

understanding and generating words and phrases in their second language (L2). Higher achievers also tend to be more confident and experience less stress in the classroom, which helps them interact with classmates and the instructor more effectively. Given this circumstance, the example above demonstrated that even proficient learners have opportunities for code-switching, which may be advantageous for them.

5. Discussion and closing notes

The research illuminates the perceived purposes and motives for codeswitching in ESL classes. Teachers may use this expertise to make educated judgments on when and how to use code-switching to improve language learning results successful. Code-switching serves as a significant educational tool that enables instructors to utilize this method in order to establish an inclusive & supportive learning environment, while also providing vital insights into its advantages.

In contrast to some prior research,^[42-44] the findings of this study indicate that code-switching may be beneficial in English language learning sessions. Furthermore, according to the results of this study, it can be said that the instructors who took part in this research expressed their disagreement with the notion of eradicating code-switching in the classroom by demonstrating that it does not hinder the progress of the learners.^[45] Regarding this matter, the research indicates that a valid reason should support codeswitching, and if it is done with awareness and discretion, it might be advantageous for learners. To successfully train future ESL teachers in the use of code-switching as a pedagogical technique, teacher educators should include discussions and reflections on the purposes and motives behind code-switching.

The current body of research on code-switching in language classrooms has yielded useful insights into the phenomena, emphasizing its widespread occurrence in English language education. Prior research^[46-48] has examined the roles of code-switching and its influence on language acquisition, with some scholars endorsing the deliberate and intentional use of code-switching when deemed appropriate. This study enhances the current body of research by providing insights into the precise attitudes and beliefs of Indian English language instructors on codeswitching.^[49] The results indicate that code-switching among English language instructors is subject to substantial variation, with the choice to code-switch being influenced by factors such as the demands of the learners and their language competency.^[50] Furthermore, the research emphasizes the significance of cognitive variables and the specific circumstances in which code-switching takes place, offering a more intricate comprehension of the motivations underlying instructors' tendency to code-switch.

The results indicate that deliberate and strategic code-switching, according to the learners' requirements and cognitive growth, may be advantageous for language learners without impeding the development and enhancement of their second language proficiency. These factors have consequences for the way teaching is supported and for finding the right balance between utilizing the native language (L1) and the second language (L2) in the classroom. This also involves considering the learners' cognitive development and the instructors' experience. Overall, this study enhances the current body of research on code-switching in language classrooms by offering valuable insights into the attitudes and views of Indian English language instructors. It is crucial for educators to carefully assess the practical consequences of code-switching in L2 classrooms and its possible advantages for language learners.

In English language classrooms, code-switching has a variety of purposes and is impacted by the students' demands and language skills. Researchers have acquired valuable knowledge on the advantages of code-switching for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. However, thoughtlessly amalgamating languages may not provide any advantages. The instructional

consequences of code-switching are generally acknowledged as significant and essential, which challenges the notion that monolingualism is the preferred strategy.

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