

Reasons Of Code-Switching in Teaching Functional English to The Undergraduate Students of Peshawar: (A Pedagogical Survey)

¹Mubashir Ahmad, ²Sama Ahmad, ³Dr. Akbar Ali

¹Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Department of English, Lincoln University College, Malaysia. Email ID: mubashir@lincoln.edu.my

²Lecturer, department of English, Women University, Mardan. Email: Samaahmad9222@yahoo.com

³Head of the English Department, Fata University, Peshawar, KPK, Pakistan (Principle supervisor of PhD English at Lincoln University College, Malaysia). Email: akbar@fu.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This paper revolves around a practical issue of Code-Switching, which takes place in a Functional English class. The use of L1 during the course of lecture, while teaching a foreign language (English) has been highly criticized. It is often deemed as a substandard method of teaching, if the concepts of foreign language are instructed through native language. To solve this real life practical problem, this paper has endeavored to conduct a pedagogical survey in the municipality of Peshawar by selecting interview method from language teachers, who teach Functional English at the undergraduate level in Peshawar. The method of data analysis is qualitative in nature, wherein the data is collected through semi-structured interviews from language teachers in Peshawar. Ten language teachers are interviewed from different private sector universities of Peshawar and their responses are subsequently analyzed descriptively by the researcher. After thorough analysis the researcher has arrived at an understanding that it may be the case that the use of native language in the class is considered to be a barrier to learning a foreign language, but in the context of Peshawar it is very much necessary opt for code-switching at least in the initial stages, where the target language becomes incomprehensible.

Keywords: Code-Switching, Functional English, Undergraduate Level, Target Language, Native language, L1, L2

Introduction:

Code-Switching is an interplay of two languages, in which a speaker alternates between two languages according to the situation. The phenomenon of Code-Switching surfaced from sociolinguistics studies, where a bilingual or multilingual speaker changes a code (language), whenever the need arises. The purpose of code-switching is that a speaker must vary the choice of language according to the comprehensibility of that language. This language change between two languages has to be understood by the context in which a language changes or code-switching becomes a need. In an academic setting, code-switching takes place between primary and secondary language.

Code-switching has several functions in terms of its occurrence. The very first function is to avoid the lack of fluency or proficiency in the target language. Secondly, it is used to shift from an informal setting

(native language) to a formal setting using (Second or foreign language). Thirdly, it gives the speaker an opportunity to identify himself with a particular group, a group whose language a speaker opts to speak.

Code switching according to Oxford advanced learner's dictionary is “the practice of changing between languages when you are speaking” has been of interest to researchers for a long time in linguistics (Poplack, 1980; Grosjean, 1982; Appel and Muysken, 1987) and sociolinguistics (Blom and Gumperz, 1972; Auer, 1988; Myers and Scotton, 1998). Because of the great deal of attention it has gained, research has caused a very multifaceted picture born out of the various linguistic approaches and contexts in which code switching has been addressed.

From 1950s and 1960s, the study of code -switching was confined to the scope of the peripheral linguistics by few scientists (Auer, 1998). Therefore, early researches were primarily focused bilingual contexts or it endeavoured to investigate the utilities of code switching in the United States in multilingual social settings (Greggio and Gil, 2007).

The groundbreaking research on code switching mostly resides on the sociolinguistic, Psychology and syntactic facets of speech in social contexts (Blom and Gumperz, 1972; Poplack, 1980; Vogt, 1954). Bloom and Gumperz’s pioneering study, for example, intended to identify the social relationships, analyzing the speech events of the speakers involved. Furthermore, it also unearthed the social information associated with code switches, this study also projected the functional distinction between situational and metaphorical code switching which was revolutionary for its time.

The first article in which the term “code switching” was used is commonly regarded to be Vogt’s article ‘Language Contacts’, published in 1954 (Alvarez-Cáccamo,1998; Benson 2001). Vogt was inspired by Weinreich’s book Languages in Contact (1953). In Vogt’s article, he says that code-switching is a psychological phenomenon: Code-switching is not a linguistic rather a sociolinguistic phenomenon not and its causes are obviously extra-linguistic. But bilingualism is a concern to a linguist because it is the situation of what has been called intervention between languages. (Vogt, 1954, p.368, cited in Nilep, 2006)

These studies concentrated on the possible social and psychological purposes of bilingual speech in social contexts and it was only after the 1980s that research on code switching in EFL classrooms was recognized by researchers to be systematic instead of being a somewhat peculiar....act’” (Luckmann, 1983, p. 97 cited in Auer, 1998).

This acknowledgement of the significance of systematic code switching in EFL classrooms signified a movement from a principal socio-psycholinguistic analysis of code-switching to an interest in the pedagogical implications of code switching in such classrooms. This is mainly because, in the mid-1990s, researchers recognized that code-switching in language classrooms might add to the instructional work teachers and students collectively construct. Multiple issues related to pedagogical implications of code switching have been explored (Greggioand Gil, 2007). Studies conducted by Martin-Jones (1995), Flyman and Burenhult(1999), Macaro (2001) and Seidlitz (2003) highlighted the communicative functions of code switching in EFL classrooms, while stressing on different aspects of this. Macaro(2001), for example, argues the facilitating role of code switching to form an interaction in foreign language classrooms. Ultimately, research into code switching in EFL classes developed into two components, which were first recognized by Martin Jones (1995):

The first component of research involves the initial studies which aimed to conduct classroom discourse analysis in bilingual classrooms. The key emphases of those studies were the communicative functions of the teacher initiated code switching and the occurrence of the language used to perform switches.

The second component comprises more current studies largely focused on the progressive flow of classroom discourse. Classroom discourse is viewed as the product of teacher and student interaction. In order to take into consideration the classroom discourse, a conversation analytic approach has been used, sometimes joined with ethnographic observation.

Martin-Jones's (1995) identification of these two elements of research into code switching forms a clear basis of possible different focus one might have in a study on code switching. The two components do not essentially imply that there is no room for the inclusion of one another; for example, communicative functions belonging to the first element can still be discussed in a study which has a conversational analytic approach. In conversation analytic study patterns of interaction surface of the data and it might be worthy consideration that how the potential communicative functions related with that might contribute to a broader understanding of conversation in the class, which is a dimension of my study.

A more latest identification of definition to code switching was recommended by Levine (2011) bearing in mind the micro-interactional features of conversation which are studied by linguists using conversation analysis as a method (Auer, 1984; Wei, 1998, 2000). These definitions are as follows: Code switching is the systematic use of two or more languages within the course of a single conversation. Code switching is the systematic use of linguistic material from two or more than two languages in the same sentence or conversation. (p. 50).

These definitions of Levine's (2011) emphasize that code switching is systematic but varies in terms of the approach to the use of language or 'choice of codes'. As for the first definition, a speaker's move from one language to another, in other words "the act of switching" (p. 50) is pertinent. Levine describes this action as speech as a train riding from one track to another, the tracks being L1 and L2 within a single expression or a conversational exchange. According to the second definition, the use of two or more codes in a discourse act cognitively or verbally is "either unexpressed or irrelevant" (ibid) because the attention is on the linguistic system used by the speakers. In other words, it comprises the process of the speaker's choice of various linguistic systems and whether these choices generate a system itself. The study has a closer relationship to Levine's first definition. Its objectives include finding systematic conversational considerations that the speakers have during interaction instead of focusing on the linguistic varieties they select from both the L1 and the L2. This, however, does not mean that the study completely disregard speakers' linguistic considerations during the interaction as they might represent perceptions or create richness for the study's interpretation of interaction, for example, if a linguistic feature acts as a contextualization clue indexing pedagogic, social or any other purposes relating teacher development.

Two specific definitions of code switching form a basis for this study. The first definition, by Valdés-Fallis (1978) comprehends code switching as "the alternating use of two languages at the word, phrase, clause, or sentence level" (p.95). This definition covers the constituents of talk in which code switching happens and the study endeavors to analyze. Another definition is a more current one by Nile (2006), who debates that code switching is "the practice of selecting or altering linguistic elements so as to contextualize talk in interaction" (p.1). Through this definition the interactional aspect of code switching is represented and how it relates to the conversation analytic approach this research use by focusing on contextualizing the talk. The following sections, discuss approaches to code switching studies in more detail in order to position this research more accurately within these.

Research design and Method of data collection:

The starting point of this research is based on a few questions that are often raised in the academic circles. Why we switch codes during teaching? What is the need of switching a code? Are there any positive outcomes of Code-switching? Does it inhibit learning? Embarking upon these few questions, the researcher realizes that there are fundamental concerns about the process code-switching in the class of Functional English at the undergraduate level in Peshawar need to be answered. As researchers, teachers and students, we are aware of this process, we practice it frequently and it is used in the course of teaching as well. Yet we are unaware that it may have enormous implications for both teachers and students. Just by understanding this process and analyzing that in how many contexts, it can be used would not suit the purpose. A more detailed analysis is required to address the new issues and concerns engendered by its role during the teaching.

Within the scope of this aim, the study has endeavored to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Why code-switching plays a facilitating role in teaching functional English?
- 2) How does it play a hampering role in the teaching of functional English?
- 3) What are the different reasons for opting to code-switching?

In order to identify that how code switching has become an integral part of teaching, the researcher has attempted to unearth the possible outcomes born out of the different reasons of its use , while teaching Functional English at the undergraduate level.

The research design and method is Qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is usually concerned with a qualitative phenomenon. It is related to those aspects that involves quality or kind. Qualitative research encompasses the investigation that seeks an answer to a question by using predetermined set of procedures. It collects the evidence and produces findings that are not determined in advance. Qualitative research is especially useful in obtaining specific information about the opinions, behaviors, values and social strata of a particular population.

The current investigation is basically a pedagogical survey. It aims to find out the reasons of code-switching, while teaching Functional English at the undergraduate level from different language teachers through semi-structured interview method. Language teachers from public/private universities have been interviewed to evaluate that what are the different reasons of code switching in teaching Functional English.

Research Type:

The current research is a survey. It is a pedagogical survey, in which, semi-structured interview method is used to find out the reasons of code-switching.

Research tools:

Research tool for this study is qualitative interview method. For the collection of data in this pedagogical survey, interview method is used to analyze the reasons for the use of code-switching. The investigation involves that how code-switching in a language learning class play its part and to elucidate this role survey method is adopted. Survey method can be done via Interviews, Observations and Questionnaires. For this study interview method is selected by the researcher for the analysis of the data. Language teachers have been interviewed by the interviewee for the collection and its analysis on the basis of appropriate responses.

Data Collection Methods:

The researcher has used the primary data gathered from interviews of different language teachers. The fundamental distinction between primary and secondary research collection is that primary research data collection involves by researcher himself, and using that data for the intended purpose or analysis. On the other hand, the secondary research data are an already available data at hand or researched by someone else.

Primary data are usually collected by a researcher for the analysis. He has a clear plan for carrying out a research, answering specific research questions and formulating a research design.

Although there are various methods for the classification of designs, those that give a clear picture of the different procedures are based on three methods of generating primary data: experimentation, observation, and survey.

Secondary data are the product of other researches, which have been collected by other researchers. Unlike primary data, secondary data are not controlled by a researcher because it is collected by someone else.

For the current study, the researcher has used primary data for analysis, i.e. the interviews from language teachers. Interviews have been conducted and replies from the teachers who teach Functional English at the undergraduate level are evaluated in a descriptive manner to explore the different reasons of code-switching in teaching Functional English at the undergraduate level.

Population and Sampling procedures:

The population for this study is language teachers from different universities of Peshawar, who teach Functional English at Undergraduate level. This includes teachers from those higher Education institutions that offer undergraduate degree courses, in which functional English is taught. The researcher has taken 10 language teachers as participants and samples, who are teachers of English at different universities of Peshawar.

The data is collected through interviews from language teachers, who teach Functional English at the Undergraduate Level. The language teachers have been selected mainly from Private Universities of Peshawar; the sample size is 10 language teachers. Code-switching is practiced frequently within every Language learning classroom, while teaching different Topics of Functional English. While observing this phenomenon, Language teachers from different Universities of Peshawar have been selected as sample for the study. The sampling technique for this study is convenience sampling. Those teachers who are available have been interviewed by the researcher for the collection of the data.

Procedure of data analysis

The procedure for analysis of the data is that interviews have been conducted from language teachers in Peshawar, who teach Functional English at Undergraduate level. The techniques for conducting a comprehensive research work have been employed these include Descriptive, Expository, Persuasive, Analytical and Argumentative.

Results and Discussion:

After thoroughly analyzing the responses, it transpires that majority of the respondents approve of code-switching in teaching of Functional English. The research findings suggest that code-switching is vital in language teaching class. Ten language teachers were interviewed for a set of eight questions and mostly the responses were in favor of code-switching. The approval ratio of code-switching outweighs the disapproval ratio of code-switching.

In response to question no 1, which was about the inevitability of code-switching in learning of Functional English, eight respondents sanctioned code-switching in language teaching class, where as two respondents opposed it.

Responding to Question no 2, which was about the reasons for encouraging code-switching in the class, nine respondents accepted code-switching in the language teaching class and one respondent disagreed with code-switching.

Responding to question no3, that asked about the function of code-switching as a learning strategy, nine respondents fully supported code-switching, while one partially disapproved and recommended it as a last resort.

To question no 4, which was about the facilitating role of code-switching, nine teachers highlighted its facilitating role, while one negated this role.

In responding to question no 5, which stated that whether code-switching hinders the language learning process or not, six respondents were of the opinion that it does not hinder the language learning process, while four respondents opined that it certainly hinders the language teaching process.

In answering question no 6, whether code-switching is an integral part of language teaching class, there was a 50/50 ratio. Five respondents believed that it is an integral part, while the remaining five rejected this argument.

Question no 7 was about the perception that mingling the target language with local language is a substandard method of teaching. Six responses stated that mixing the target language with local language is not a substandard method of teaching, while four responses described this blending as a sub-standard method.

Question no 8 asked the language teachers that if abandoning affects the language learning process or not. Eight answers came in favor of its use in language class but two responses repudiated this idea that abandoning code-switching will affect the language learning process.

In view of the foregoing, it can be concluded that majority of language teachers approve code-switching as a viable technique in teaching Functional English and enhancing student's proficiency in this regard. Some responses did not favor code-switching as a language teaching strategy and denied its use in the teaching of Functional English. Inferring from the findings, it can be accepted that code-switching is widely believed to be a feasible strategy in English language teaching pedagogy, specifically in the context of Peshawar. In Peshawar, the student's lack familiarity with the target language, and to make the feel at home in a English language class, code-switching can be used to supplement the teaching of Functional English.

The current study is compatible to previous researches in terms of approval ratio of code-switching in the language class. Multiple researches have been conducted on the use of code-switching in teaching English as a foreign language; most of these researches either fully supports code-switching or partially approve its use in EFL English as a foreign language class. Although there are some studies that disfavor the use of code-switching, but the approval ratio is considerably higher than its disapproval ration.

Studies conducted by the following researchers and authors accepts the viability of code-switching in the class: Blom and Gumpers, 1972 ; Grosjean, 1982; Auers, 1988; Wei, 1998; Myers and scotton, 1998 and Macaro 2005; Levine 2011 favoured the use of code-switching in EFL classes. On the contrary Willis, 1981; Sharwood-Smith 1985; turnbull, 2001 have discarded the use of code-switching in language teaching class.

Comparison of the previous studies with the findings of research reveals that the current study is in agreement with previous research findings. Researches in the past by various researchers have also

acknowledged the importance of code-switching in EFL classes. They are of the opinion that limiting language teaching to target language will obstruct the variety in language teaching. Teaching a foreign language should not be restricted to the target language alone, rather minimal doses of L1 has to be incorporated to enhance the learning potential if the students. Researchers like Rubdy, 2007 and Moodley, 2007 advocate code-switching in multilingual societies. They view code-switching as a pedagogical resource in the multilingual setting.

Peshawar is also a multilingual city, several languages are spoken in the municipality of Peshawar. Pashto, Hindko, Urdu and Punjabi are commonly spoken languages. This situation necessitates the indispensability of code-switching for language teaching in the class. Because students come mostly from diverse backgrounds and their association with the target language(English) is either missing or scarce. To overcome such a situation, code-switching becomes all the more necessary. So, this study also agrees with the previous findings on code-switching and its utility for language pedagogue in a sense that it dilute incomprehensibility of target language in the class. Teaching the concepts of Functional English also requires code-switching as the student's understanding of the subject is not sufficient at the initial stage. Thus code-switching as a teaching strategy should be welcomed in the preliminary stages of teaching Functional English, while reducing its role in the succeeding phases of teaching Functional English.

| Question No: | Questions | Favorable Responses | Unfavorable Responses |
|---------------------|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) | Why Code-Switching is inevitable for enhancing the capability of students in learning Functional English? | 8 | 2 |
| 2) | What are the different reasons that encourage Language teachers to opt for Code-Switching in the class? | 10 | 0 |
| 3) | While teaching Functional English at the Undergraduate level, what is the function of Code-Switching as a teaching strategy? | 10 | 0 |
| 4) | If you believe that Code-Switching plays a facilitating role in teaching Functional English, What can it be? | 9 | 1 |
| 5) | If you believe Code-Switching hinders the Language learning process at the undergraduate level, how it inhibit learning English | 7 | 3 |
| 6) | Do you think that Code-Switching has become an integral part of Language teaching class? If your answer | 6 | 4 |

| | | | |
|----|--|---|---|
| | is yes then why it has become integral? | | |
| 7) | Many academicians consider that Mingling of Target language with local languages is largely perceived as a sub-standard method of teaching. Do you also agree with them? | 5 | 5 |
| 8) | Will abandoning Code-Switching affect the language learning process? If your answer is yes then elaborate on it? | 8 | 2 |

References:

1. Alvarez-Cáccamo, C. (1998). From ‘Switching Code’ to ‘Code-switching’: Towards a Reconceptualization of Communicative Codes. In Peter Auer (ed.) Code
2. Switchingin Conversation: Language, Interaction, and Identity, pp. 29-48.London:Routledge..
3. Auer, P. (1988). A conversational analytic approach to code-switching and transfer.
4. InMonica Heller(ed.),Code switching: Anthropological andsociolinguistic perspectives, 187-213. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
5. Auer, P. (1998). Code-switching in Conversation: Language, Interaction, and Identity. London: Rout ledge.
6. Benson, E. (2001). The neglected early history of code switching research in the United States. Language and Communication 21: 23-36.
7. Blom, J. P. and Gumperz, J. J. (1972). Social meaning in linguistic structures? Code-switching in Norway. In J. J. Gumperz, D. Hymes eds., Directions in sociolinguistics. The ethnography of communication. New York: Holt, Rinehartand Winston, pp. 407-34.
8. Flyman, A. and Burenhult, N. (1999). Code switching in second language teaching ofFrench.Lund University, Dept. Of Linguistics1, WorkingPapers, 47, pp. 59-72.
9. Levine, G. S. (2011). Code Choice in the Language Classroom. Bristol: MultilingualMatters.
10. Luckmann, T. (1983). Comment [on Breitborde]. International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 39, pp. 97-101.
11. Martin-Jones, M. (1995). Code-switching in the classrooms: Two decades of research.
12. InMilroy, L. And Muysken, P. (eds.) One speaker Two languages: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on Code-switching. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 90-112.
13. Macaro, E. (2001). Analysing student teachers’ code switching in foreign language classrooms: Theories and decision making. The Modern Language Journal, 85, 4, pp. 531-548.
14. Nilep, C. (2006). Code switching” in Sociocultural Linguistics. Colorado Research in Linguistics. Vol. 19, 2-22.
15. Poplack, S. (1980), Sometimes I'll start a sentence in English y termino en espanol: Toward a typology of code-switching. Linguistics, 18, (7-8), 581-616.
16. Seidlitz, L. M. (2003). Functions of Code switching in Classes of German as a Foreign Language. Doctoral dissertation, The University of Texas, Austin.
17. Vogt, Hans. (1954). Language contacts. Word 10 (2-3): 365-374