

## Review Article

# Understanding Code-switching from a Sociolinguistic Perspective: A Meta-analysis

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**Abstract:** A meta-analysis or synthesis of prior research critically presents research findings in a discipline of knowledge to review and summarize these findings from a bird's eye view in order to put these findings appropriately within the state of the art. This meta-analysis seeks to tackle the issue of code-switching from a sociolinguistic and language pedagogical perspective. The study is a theoretical paper that highlights the concept of code-switching as a socio-linguistic and educational phenomenon as well as to present the social facts and factors that were investigated and highlighted in linguistic research. The methodology adopted in this paper is research synthesis which aims to combine the results of multiple primary research studies on code-switching to highlight the concept of code-switching from a sociolinguistic and language educational perspective. Research synthesis in this paper was conducted to cover qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods research studies and cases studies that employed cases studies and historical/anecdotal studies with the purpose of juxtaposing these findings from different studies to make these findings more applicable and generalisable in the field of foreign language education. Towards this end, the paper presents the different definitions of this phenomenon and the history of its development in linguistic theory as well as in language research. It also proceeds to highlight the sociolinguistic and pedagogical approaches to researching code-switching in terms of its functions, teachers' attitudes and pedagogical applications. Eventually, the paper summarizes the role of code-switching in English language teaching philosophy and pedagogy.

**Keywords:** Code-switching, Sociolinguistics, Language Pedagogy, Meta-analysis

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## 1. Introduction

This meta-analysis addresses the issues related to code-switching from a sociolinguistic and language educational perspective. In this way, the literature review positions code-switching within its broad sociolinguistic perspective to elaborate on the relationship between code-switching and sociolinguistics. Furthermore, it defines code-switching, classifies its types and reviews its history. In this vein, too, the literature review will elaborate on the functions of code-switching. This is to be followed by a review of the pedagogical uses of code-switching within English language teaching methods and approaches. It further tackles the use of the mother tongue of learners in foreign language learning, its role and the naturalness of code-switching in EFL classrooms.

### Objective

This meta-analysis seeks to review, summarize and critically juxtapose writings, research findings and analyses of the concept of code-switching and its applications in the sociolinguistics of foreign language education.

### Methodology

The overarching aim of this synthesis research was to conduct an integrative review of the most relevant literature to examine the historical, sociolinguistic, contextual, pedagogical and evolving research on code-switching as an adaptive mechanism used in the foreign language classroom and outside in real-time life situations. This meta-analysis is set to systematically review qualitative, quantitative, narrative and thematic studies conducted on code-switching in classroom settings and off-campus. Therefore, the researcher searched databases, including Google Scholar, Proquest, ERIC, EBSCO and Science Direct over a period of three

decades from 1981 to 2016. The searches were done using key words as code-switching, sociolinguistics, language pedagogy. The searches yielded a gargantuan number of studies and researches in the form of papers, dissertations, monographs, and book chapters. The materials selected for analysis were chosen to meet the following criteria: 1] materials published in English in academic journals or in published books; 2] materials that reported on empirical field studies, anecdotal reports or historical/typological studies; 3] materials that identified issues related to specific situations where code-switching is repeatedly resorted to, case studies and pedagogical effects; 4] materials that identified challenges and limitations that code-switching imposed on foreign language learners and teachers at tertiary education institutions. Exclusion criteria included 1] the keywords did not appear in the title or abstract; and 2] the findings or main propositions did not fit the scheme of the present paper.

## 2. Sociolinguistics

Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz [42] define sociolinguistics as “the descriptive study of the effect of any and all aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations, and context, on the way language is used, and society's effect on language” [p. 532]. Both researchers discriminated between sociolinguistics and the sociology of languages as two different, yet related disciplines of theoretical linguistics. The former addresses the effect of society on language while the latter studies the effect of language on society. Paulston, Bratt & Tucker [92] explain that sociolinguistics relates to the anthropology of language, and therefore, it focuses on research that investigates into the differences between language varieties and registers as used by different human groups who are distinguished from each other on such variables as gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic and educational status, religion, demographics, etc. Therefore, sociolinguistics focuses on research that investigates idiolects, sociolects and variations of language use among social classes, ethnic groups and different races [23, 89, 120].

Sociolinguistics focuses on language uses and variations of these uses from one place to another, from one social class to another and from one language to another. Sociolinguistics is a discipline of linguistics that focuses its investigations on the linguistic and social behaviours of speech communities. That is, it researches into how a distinct group of language users will use their mother language or a foreign language they learn besides their native language in a unique way mutually understandable and acceptable between the individuals of this speech community.

In other words, sociolinguistics explores the *sprechbund* of the languages spoken by the speech community. This term, *sprechbund*, is clarified by Romaine [103] who defines it as the “shared ways of speaking which go beyond language boundaries” [p. 23]. The study of *sprechbund* as one focal research interest in sociolinguistics emanates from the fact that individuals in a speech community who speak different languages can share specific language properties or

characteristics that will make them speak any of the languages they have acquired or learned in specific ways. This is exactly relevant to the interruptive use of one language with another, known as code-switching.

### *Code-switching as a Sociolinguistic Phenomenon*

Code-switching is a distinct linguistic behaviour of bilingual speakers or foreign language learners as an important feature of their communicative competence [16, 66]. Code-switching is influenced by a tapestry of sociolinguistic variables and properties [62, 67, 71, 96]. Code-switching is closely related to and spawned from bilingual speech since this speech is always ‘socially embedded’ [58, p. 73]. Weinreich [121] rightly observed that “when a language contact situation is examined in detail, the interrelation of socio-cultural conditions and linguistic phenomena is apparent” [p. 83]. In this regard, Thomason and Kaufman [113] argued that the relationship between sociolinguistics as the study of language in social contexts and code-switching arises from the postulation that language use and language change are determined by ‘contact-induced’ factors in the language situation. They further argue that social facts of a given contact situation are what determine why and how people code-switch without regarding the structural linguistic relations between the languages they speak. Relevantly, research involving case studies on code-switching have shown considerable differences in codeswitching behaviours between speech communities, even when bilinguals as such are involved in using the same language dyads [78, 96, 124].

### *Social facts and social factors influencing code-switching research*

Social factors that sociolinguistics is interested in have been found to be of relevance to the study of bilingualism research [16, 90], including the study of code-switching as an area of research in sociolinguistics and neurolinguistics [90, 105]. Theories of bilingualism have addressed the sociolinguistic and socio-cultural aspects of first and second [or foreign] language use. Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog [122], in this vein, explained that sociolinguistics examines the interrelated social factors that influence contact situations and the linguistic facts of bilingual individuals - a relationship better studied in code-switching situations. Therefore, the sociolinguistics literature on code-switching includes reviews of research on the role of intercultural communication [e.g., 83, 81, 82, 60]. Angermeyer [8] adeptly comments on the review of research on code-switching as part of sociolinguistic research as follows:

“It is perhaps no coincidence that these studies rank among the most prominent and influential examples of codeswitching research, as the divergence in speakers’ repertoires has allowed researchers to interpret incidents of codeswitching in relation to the participants’ language preferences and to the macro-sociolinguistic factors that condition them” [p. 469].

Of date, sociolinguists and language anthropologists have developed a research interest in the study of code-switching, especially in bilingual settings and in situations where a foreign language is taught such as EFL classrooms [52]. Research findings on the topic indicated that bilinguals and

foreign language learners can use the target language differentially in their contact with their conversation partners systematically as a function of the interlocutors, the settings, the communication message or content and the topic of conversation [16, 29, 30-32]. These will be referred to as the *mode*, *theme* and *topic* later in this literature review. Sociolinguistic research views code-switching in this regard as 'a vehicle for their social play' [35, 100]. A common ground for research on code-switching within the realms of sociolinguistics would render the topic an important aspect of bilingualism research [30, 34, 53, 124].

### 3. Code-switching: Definitions of the Concept

Code-switching is a divergent and discrete language behaviour that bilingual individuals exhibit as a function of their communicative competence [35, 62, 67]. Code-switching, in this conception, cannot be treated as a language deficit in bilingual speech or in the practice of bilingual language users [66]. Code switching is the phenomenon where a speaker switches between two languages or variants of the same language within or across utterances, known as intra-sentential or inter-sentential code switching, respectively [3].

#### Definitions

Code-switching is defined as a sophisticated, rule-governed, and systematic communicative behaviour used by linguistically competent bilinguals to achieve a variety of communicative goals [33, 93, 115]. It is the product of intertwined, highly intricate sociolinguistic variables, which influence the structural, semantic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic properties of the languages spoken by bilinguals [71, 96].

In a similar tone, Gumperz [40] defines code-switching as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems". This definition refers to intrasentential switches [51]. Richard and colleague [102] define the phenomenon more broadly as a "change by a speaker [or writer] from one language or language variety to another" [p. 58]. Grosjean [38] defines it as "the utilization of a word, a phrase, a sentence or several sentences of more than one language in a single conversation" [p. 145]. This definition covers both intersentential and intrasentential switches.

Milroy and Muysken [76, p. 7] define code-switching as "the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation". Poplack [96, p. 583] defines code-switching as "the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent." Mazur, Karolczak, Rzepka and Araki [71] define code-switching as... "a phenomenon that exists in many multilingual societies where people use more than one language to communicate on a daily basis, such as Singapore, the Philippines, India, the USA, Spain and China... [or] the alternation of two languages within

a single discourse, sentence or constituent" [p. 55].

According to the authors, code-switching includes code mixing and code changing, or could be named as such, where this sociolinguistic phenomenon could occur at the lexical level when there is no instant equivalent for a word or sentence in the spoken language, or it could take place at the semantic level, when an idea is better explained in the language currently spoken by a bilingual in a given language situation.

Code-switching also occurs in speech communities where a diversity of languages exists and when speakers alternate between languages and language varieties in the same conversational episode [4, p. 13]. As such, code-switching refers to language swapping, dialectal variations, stylistic alterations in spoken and written forms in different contact situations.

In a similar vein, Romaine [103] describes code-switching as "a communicative option available to a bilingual member of a speech community on much the same basis as switching between styles or dialects is an option for the monolingual speaker" [p. 59]. Auer [9], in a similar mode, views code-switching as a robust discourse strategy where code-switches basally for skilled bilinguals can indicate change of participant, parenthetical comments, or a topic shift, along with other discourse features. For him, access to a second language "provides specific resources not available to monolingual speakers for the constitution of socially meaningful verbal activities" [p. 115]. This access to a second language and its continued integration into the multilingual populations and their linguistic abilities with direct effects on how bilinguals and multilinguals envisage language acquisition, maintenance, and other changes throughout the lifespan of individuals [98].

Cook [2008] defines code-switching more clearly as the process in which bi-multilinguals keep "going from one language to the other in mid-speech when both speakers know the same two languages" [p. 174].

From these definitions above cited, code-switching by definition describes a sociolinguistic phenomenon that relates to language switches, dialectal variations, and stylistic, pragmatic alterations and syntactic or structural variations at the word, phrase or sentence levels.

#### Types of Code-switching

Researchers differed in their use of the term code-switching. For instance, Bokamba [15], Kachru [49], Muysken [80], and Clyne [1987] have used the term code-switching differently from code-mixing. According to them, code-switching relates to switches between sentences in two different languages spoken by bilinguals or multilinguals, whereas code-mixing relates to such changes within the single sentence [24]. Other researchers describe code-switching as switches or linguistic swaps that take place *between* utterances [intersentential] or *within* utterances [intrasentential] at the *lexical* level or at the *structural and syntactic* level [71, 101, 124]. Bilinguals or multilinguals use code switching to relay the expected meaning more accurately as speakers think in a contact situation [124].

Poplack [96], in this vein, distinguishes between three types of code-switching that possibly occur in discourse: tag switches, intrasentential switches, and intersentential switches.

#### *Tag switches*

Tag switches normally include the insertion of a tag or a short expression like discourse markers or fillers [such as 'you know' or 'I mean'] in one language into a sentence in the other language not currently in use during a conversation as in *Biladna tayyeba*, you know [*Our country is good*, you know]. Such inclusion of a tag like a discourse marker or conversational fillers can be simply inserted in discourse without breaking the syntactic structure of the matrix language, or the language used in the conversation.

#### *Intrasentential switches*

These switches take place within clause boundaries inside a sentence or even within the word boundary. In other words, intrasentential switches are within the same sentence, from single morpheme level to higher levels. This means that both languages may be used within the same turn [in either Arabic or English contexts]. Poplack [96, p. 589] indicates that intrasentential code-switching requires interlocutors to exercise the greatest deftness and fluency in both languages that bilinguals switch between. In this respect, Romaine [103] concurs with Poplack [96] that intrasentential code-switching involves a high syntactic risk because due to the effort of blending two or more linguistic systems in the same mainstream discourse. However, this is classically looked upon as the worst type of code-switching being practiced out of indolence or imperfect or insufficient language competence.

#### *Intersentential switches*

This type of code-switching takes place at sentence boundaries, where the speaker says a sentence fully in one language or another. This means that all phrases in one turn may be produced in Arabic in an English context. [96, p. 594]. This type of code-switching requires a greater fluency and deftness in using both languages than tag switching.

#### *Code-switching versus Borrowing*

Researchers also made a distinction between code-switching and borrowing. This distinction is hard to detect in the sociolinguistic literature, given that the lexical and syntactico-phonemic features of languages could be inter-shared [Haugen, 1953]. In this light, Gumperz [39] maintains that.

"Borrowing consists of the introduction of single words or short, frozen, idiomatic phrases from one language into the other. The items in question are incorporated into the grammatical systems of the borrowing language. They are treated as part of its lexicon, take on its morphological characteristics and enter into its syntactic structures. Code-switching by contrast relies on the meaningful juxtaposition of what speakers must process as strings formed according to the internal syntactic rules of two distinct systems" [p. 8].

Poplack [97] further differentiates between borrowing and code-switching on the ground that borrowing generally occurs

at the phonological, morphological, and syntactical levels, with loanwords fully integrated into the host language. Based on this distinction by Poplack [97], borrowing is understood to require monolingual competence only, but codeswitching requires at least some competence in at least two languages.

#### *Situational versus Metaphorical Code-switching*

According to Blom and Gumperz [14], code-switching could be either situational [switches that occur due to change in the setting or the situation] or metaphorical [switches that take place when there is a change in topical emphasis]. In Blom and Gumperz's own words [14]:

"An important distinction is made between situational switching, where alternation between varieties redefines a situation, being a change in governing norms, and metaphorical switching, where alternation enriches a situation, allowing for allusion to more than one social relationship within the situation... situational switching involves change in participants and/or strategies, metaphorical switching involves only a change in topical emphasis" [p. 409].

The taxonomy of Blom and Gumperz' [14] with regard to *situational versus metaphorical* code-switching was criticized for lacking clarity and on the grounds that "the relationship between language choice and situational features is less rigid, more open to re-negotiation" [Auer, 1984, p. 91]. Subsequently, Gumperz [40, pp. 75-84] developed the term "conversational code-switching" to replace situational code-switching.

## 4. On the History of Code-switching

The socio-cultural and linguistic milieus of teaching English in non-native settings can be inherently bilingual or multilingual contexts dominated by bilingual teachers and students who bring their linguistic identities and sociolinguistic profiles and identities into the classroom [52]. In this way, some researchers believe that using one's native language in the foreign language classroom is inevitable and can be accepted and exploited as language learning resources, whereas others believe it to be sources of problems and impediments to the foreign language learning process [25, 37, 60, 69, Zhou 2003].

For this camp of researchers who see code-switching as problematic to learning, some have drawn a link between underachievement in foreign language learning and the use of the students' first language in the classroom [52, 60].

Others have accumulated anecdotal evidence from practitioner teachers as well as empirical evidence from field studies indicating that the use of the first language in swap with the target language can be resourceful for foreign language learning as well as it can help them easily acquire the meanings of difficult to learn vocabulary and hard to teach grammar points [25, 37, 64, 68]. This language swap process is called code-switching.

Code-switching is a typically common behaviour of bilingual students characteristic of EFL contexts. It is an idiosyncratic language phenomenon descriptive of communicative language use [66]. Prior research suggests that

code-switching is a complicated, rule-governed, and systematic communicative stratagem typically employed by competent bi-multilingual individuals in a language contact situation [33, 93, 115].

Early researchers of code-switching [e.g. 14] were partially impacted by the works of Ferguson's [27] and Fishman's [1965], especially with regard to their seminal work on diglossia and register, in the tradition of sociology rather than sociolinguistics.

Prior research also demonstrated that EFL students who resort to code-switching with different conversational partners to indicate that their language proficiency is still in a developing stage [26, 30, 73, 91]. EFL learners typically and systematically use code-switching as a function of the participants, the setting, the message, and to some extent, the topic of conversation [29, 30, 31, 32].

Individual learners of foreign languages have been found to use the stratagem of code-switching in a variety of ways that rely on the role of the interlocutor in a conversation or the interactional function in a language use context [See e.g. 14]. This means that code-switching relies on the topic, the mode and theme of a given discourse. Some topics are better experienced in some languages than others. Therefore, interlocutors resort to code-switching because they feel they are better able to express themselves in the language that they switch to. According to Stroud, "speakers who code-switch are seen as appealing to the rights, obligations and identities associated with each language" [Stroud, 1998, p. 322]. Thus, sociolinguistic researchers have recognized a direct association between a language and its cultural values, which would lead a speaker to switch to a language s/he feels they can summon their identity in more easily. In this sense, Cheng [18] aptly observed, "multilingual speakers use two or more languages as a way of accomplishing a vast array of functions in interaction, such as identity construction, stance-taking, and the building up of diverse social relations." [p. 870].

In addition, mood emotions has much to do with code-switching to match one's emotional state. Some people are better able to express their emotions in one language than another, especially when they are agitated. For themes, some are more conducive to code-switching than others. Religious themes will induce code-switching to Arabic by EFL Arab students. They can flexibly adapt themselves to the conversation requirements by code-switching to the more accessible language as an easier communication vehicle [101]. Thus, codeswitching is a natural communicative strategy in foreign language classes indicative of the learners' bi-literate development [30, 34, 53, 124].

According to these researchers and teachers in the field, code-switching can be utilized in a strategic way for constructing and transfer of learning as well as for sustaining social relations in the classroom and for maintaining discipline in classroom management mechanisms [Creese & Martin, 2003, 27, 44, 52]. Researchers have also prolixly elaborated on the social and psychological benefits of code-switching, suggesting that the strict restriction to the use of the target language as the language of learning and language of

classroom can ostensibly create a state of conflict and tension in foreign language classrooms [52, Baker, 2000; Cummins, 1991, 2000; Fishman, 1991; Wei and Martin, 2009]. According to Wei and Martin [2009], the restriction to the policy of "one-language only" in foreign language learning settings can potentially be conducive to ...

"tensions and conflicts between the dominant language ideologies and policies in the so-called bilingual education programmes on the one hand and the actual practices of teachers and pupils on the other" [61, p. 208].

Code-switching has provoked substantial research in the bilingual and multilingual communities during the past several decades. Myers-Scotton [1993] stated that interest in code-switching began in 1972. Gardener-Chloros [2009] defined code-switching as "the use of two or more languages in the same conversation or utterance" [p. 97]. Gumperz [40], a pioneer researcher in code-switching, classified it into two categories: conversational and situational. Conversational code-switching occurs when speakers are motivated by various factors when speaking, while situational code-switching occurs depending on context, such as at school or work.

Based on Gumperz' categorization, classroom code-switching is most likely to be an example of situational code-switching. Many studies have been conducted in various contexts with different languages to investigate types of code-switching, its social effects, and its functions [40, 1, 45, 11, 6, 123, 79, 83, 47]. As many studies were conducted to investigate the functions of code-switching in the FL classroom context, almost no studies have investigated the use of code-switching by Saudi EFL university teachers.

Many previous studies have investigated types of code-switching [76, 48, 56]. Gumperz conducted the most in-depth study of code-switching in 1982. He sub-categorized code-switching into conversational and situational code-switching. He defined conversational code-switching as the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems. This type of code-switching tends to occur subconsciously as the speakers are motivated by factors within the conversation itself as it takes place. In contrast, situational code-switching involves changes in language choice because of the speaker's environment. Situational code-switching might occur at school, work, or in public gatherings where the situation demands formal use of language.

In light of Gumperz' [40] classification, classroom code-switching would be considered situational. Merrit et al. [1992] argued that choosing the language of instruction is necessarily more complex than can be legislated by language policy. Although this policy asserts that English teachers should use only English in teaching, actual classroom practice may differ [52]. Teachers might code-switch to the native language for various reasons and functions [108, 122]. Hence, code-switching in this particular study referred to teachers' alternative use of English and Arabic within English classes.

## 5. Sociolinguistic Approaches to Code-switching

Sociolinguistic literature related to first, second and foreign language acquisition [and learning] shows that languages are acquired, learned and developed through social interactions, which provide many opportunities for learners to have access to comprehensible input, and to have as many opportunities to produce comprehensible output during conversation and negotiation of meaning [54, 63, 94, 111].

Sociolinguistic approaches to code-switching help researchers to recognize and identify the factors that affect code-switching as well as help in determining the functions of code-switching in discourse. Two approaches have been identified in relevant literature: the sociolinguistic approach and the interactional approach. The sociolinguistic approach examines code-switching from a macro-perspective where code-switching is examined within language use in a speech community to find out how members in this speech community use it, in what situations and for which purposes. According to this approach, code-switching is seen not basically as an issue of competence, but is primarily influenced by the macro-sociolinguistic factors of the institutional setting and the larger societal context [28]. According to Bourdieu [1991], code-switching can be explained in interactions that take place in bi-multi-lingual speeches in manners strongly impacted by the macro-sociolinguistic facts of the interlocution situation.

On the other side, the interactional approach takes a more micro view of language use, aiming to scrutinize certain functions of specific excerpts in discourse where of code-switching takes place. This analysis, according to this approach, can be done by exploring bilingual switches in certain conversational contexts, given the fact that interlocutors give meanings to their language choices since interlocutors are the ones who seek to realize specific communicative needs in their specific language choices.

## 6. The Functions of Code-switching

According to Gort [35], four general categories of code-switching functions emerged, specifically in bilingual writers' written discourse; these are: "[a] evaluation and self-regulation skills, [b] sociolinguistic or sociocultural competence, [c] metalinguistic insights, and [d] use of code-switching to indicate a shift in topic, person, or syntactic form" [p. 56].

However, in oral discourse, Gumperz [40, pp. 75-84] detected the six functions of code-switching based on a case study: [1] quotation [a switch can be identified either as a direct quotation in a different language or as a reported speech]; [2] specification of the addressee as the recipient of the message to include or exclude specific interlocutors in a group; [3] reiterations to clarify or emphasize a point in both [or more] languages; [4] interjections due to personal emotional associations with different codes; [5] qualification of a message [as when the main message is expressed in one

language and followed by an explanation in the other language]; [6] differentiation between what is personal and what is general. This happens since some languages in speakers' repertoires are more likely to express objective facts, while others may be more related to personal/subjective opinion.

Cheng [18] indicated that code-switching accomplishes "a vast array of functions in interaction, such as identity construction, stance-taking, and the building up of diverse social relations" [p. 870]. When bilingual students resort to code-switching, they are reformulating a phrase, sentence or bit of discourse in a different code to emphasize the telling of the same idea with volume, speech speed, or prosodic emphasis.

Appel and Muysken [1987] describe six functions of code-switching [verbatim from Jakobson's six functions of language, 1960]: [1] the referential function: code-switching fills out communication gaps in one of the two languages used in the conversation; [2] the directive function: code-switching includes or excludes specific interlocutors by using either the speaker's preferred or un-preferred language choice; [3] the expressive function: code-switching does not carry a specific meaning, but expresses a bilingual status; [4] the phatic function: [akin to Gumperz' metaphorical code-switching]: code-switching helps to change the tone of the conversation; [5] the metalinguistic function: code-switching helps to express attitude or knowledge of language; [6] the poetic function: code-switching is used for artistic/aesthetic purposes such as poetry, drama, joking, etc. These six functions of code-switching described by Appel and Muysken generally overlap with Gumperz' typology of the functions of code-switching.

### *Pedagogical Functions of Code-switching*

Ferguson [27, pp. 231-232] suggests three broad pedagogic functions for classroom code-switching:

[1] *For constructing and transmitting knowledge.* This function is to make sure whether learners got the message or not. It can also be used to clarify the meaning of  $L_2$  via  $L_1$ .

[2] *For classroom management.* Foreign language instructors express their emotions and ideas better in learners' first language when there is a management problem or for praising commendable learning behaviours or moral conduct. Here, the aim is not to assess if the learner can understand  $L_2$  or not, but it is to transfer the intended message via  $L_1$ .

[3] *For interpersonal relations and to humanize the classroom climate.* This function is active when foreign language is not used in a formal setting, especially for teachers to build mutual trust between the instructors and the students, and for students to feel self-confident in the classroom. Learners may not have sufficient linguistic input to express their ideas and feelings, so they may resort to code-switching in order not to feel that they are limited in proficiency to engage in interpersonal relationships with their foreign language teachers. When teachers and learners seek to build rapport with each other, it is probable that they switch to  $L_1$ .

Macaro [1997], in a similar mode, mentions the functions of code-switching to  $L_1$  in the foreign language classroom during

the teaching process. He observed that switching to the students' mother tongue helps:

- a) To give instructions related to activities;
- b) To translate and check comprehension;
- c) To give individual comments to students;
- d) To give feedback; and
- e) To maintain discipline.

In foreign language learning contexts, Jingxia [48] suggested that teachers and learners resort to code-switching to L1 for translating vocabulary, explaining grammar, managing class and building close relation with learners. By the same token, Eldridge [25] indicated that code-switching is used to facilitate target language learning and to serve some pedagogical purposes such as providing equivalence of unknown vocabulary, starting a class and breaking ice with new students, reiteration of ideas to ensure comprehension, establishing group membership, and resolving conflicts in classroom management. Villamil and Guerrero [117] explained that code-switching is used in foreign language classrooms for making meaning of the text, retrieving language from memory, explaining and expanding content, guiding their action through the task, and maintaining dialogue.

## 7. Teachers' Attitudes Toward Code-switching

Code-switching is a common phenomenon in foreign language classrooms. Many researchers have argued that code-switching can be a significant element in developing English language teaching and the learning process [57, 19, 21, 106, 17, 112, 36, 70]. In addition, Qing [99] suggested that code-switching is a beneficial tool that serves functions that may enrich the language-learning environment. In his study of Spanish students in EFL classrooms, Schweers [106] found that the majority of teachers encouraged code-switching in their classes. The participants also claimed that code-switching is time consuming, and therefore allows them more time to practice English and engage in more activities.

Cook [2002] claimed that two conditions should be considered when language teachers use code-switching. First, code-switching should be avoided in multilingual classrooms, as it can lead to misunderstanding and confusion because the students do not share the same language. Second, the teachers' competence in teaching L1 must be considered when affective code-switching is expected.

Code-switching should be limited to students with low levels of English proficiency and used only to clarify a word's meaning or explain grammar; it should not be used when students are highly proficient.

In contrast, in the FL context in which students are exposed to English only in the classroom, code-switching may have a negative effect on their communication with native speakers. This argument was supported by Eldridge [25] and Sert [108], who claimed that teachers' continual use of code-switching in translation instruction eventually prevents students from

becoming autonomous learners.

### *The Functions of EFL Teachers' Code-switching*

In foreign language classrooms, code-switching is related to living interpersonal interactions [119]. Where the EFL context is complex and variable, code-switching becomes more frequently in use [104]. Moodley [77] also maintained that EFL teachers resort to code-switching in the foreign language classroom for explaining linguistic insecurity, affective functions, socializing functions, repetitive functions, etc. [74] Auer [10] suggested that code-switching can provide the most precise description, but not meaningful explanation.

While teaching foreign languages, many teachers switch from one language to another or from one dialect to another, either intentionally or unintentionally. These kinds of code-switching serve certain functions beneficial in teaching and learning FL. In a comprehensive study, Mattson and Burenhults Mattson [1999] determined three main functions of code-switching: topic shift, and affective and repetitive functions. These functions are the primary focus of this study, and are explained in more detail below.

### *Topic Shift*

Several researchers have claimed that topic plays a significant role in code-switching [1, 45, 100, 59]. For example, Bensen and Çavuşoğlu [13] found that teachers shift to the mother tongue of their students to increase their understanding of the new language. These results are consistent with those of Krashen [53], who evaluated the factors that affect code-switching among 15 bilingual university students. The findings revealed that the major factor in code-switching was to convey the meaning accurately.

Some researchers have claimed that using students' previous experience with, or rules in their mother tongue while presenting a new topic or clarifying instructions will increase their understanding of the new language [12, 19]. Ibrahim et al.'s [47] work supported this claim, as the teachers in his study switched the topic from the target language [English] to the students' mother tongue [Malay] to explain grammatical rules.

### *Affective Functions*

Teachers tend to express certain emotions and attitudes in another language. Bensen and Çavuşoğlu [13] investigated the reasons that teachers code-switched in adult EFL classrooms in North Cyprus, and reported that they did so to foster a supportive language environment in the classroom. Al-Khatib [6] also indicated that speakers might change their language to express a variety of emotions.

According to Gumperz [41], teachers use code-switching to share the students' emotions, create a soft atmosphere, and narrow the gap between teachers and students. Some previous studies have recommended code-switching for affective purposes [Auebach, 1993; 20; 46]. Auerbach [12] claimed that code-switching is a supportive tool to increase language proficiency in English and stated that it "...reduces anxiety and enhances the affective environment for learning, takes into account social factors, facilitates incorporation of learners' life

experiences and allows for learner-centered curriculum development” [p. 20].

#### *Repetitive Functions*

Previous studies have demonstrated that code-switching maybe employed in circumstances where there is a lack of one word in either language. Therefore, teachers use code-switching to clarify the meaning of words or concepts. Furthermore, teachers use code-switching to introduce the meaning of new concepts [41, 50, 114]. Qing [99] found that teachers in her study translated or elaborated important points while explaining new vocabulary or grammar rules. Gumperz [40] pointed out that code-switching enables teachers to convey precise meanings that maximize learning.

Consistent with his study, Auerbach [12] identified the following reasons for code-switching: classroom management, explaining grammar, giving instructions and checking comprehension, and for cultural purposes. The results of Walt's [118] study of the functions of code-switching in English classes in schools in the Western Cape found that teachers translated classroom instructions into Afrikaans to ensure that they were understood well.

#### *Reasons for Code-switching Identified in Research*

Some studies have identified various reasons or functions of code-switching [110, 45, 11, 6, 7, 2]. For example, Abdel Tawwab [2] claimed that speakers may switch from one language to another for various reasons: to show solidarity with a social group or participate in social encounters, to distinguish themselves, to discuss a certain topic, to express emotions, or to persuade their audience. Furthermore, code-switching can be used to show solidarity among people from different or the same ethnic groups. In this respect, Martin-Jones [68] explains. "... whenever a bilingual who has the same language background as the learners switches into shared codes, s/he is invariably expressing solidarity with the learners. Code-switching is employed in more subtle and diverse ways in bilingual classroom communication. Teachers and learners exploit code contrasts to demarcate different types of discourse, to negotiate and renegotiate joint frames of reference and to exchange meaning on the spur of the moment" [p. 98].

As Holmes [45] indicated, "A speaker may switch to another language as a signal of group membership and shared ethnicity within an addressee." According to Al-Khatib [6], speakers may code-switch to reflect their social class. In addition, Alsibai [7] investigated code-switching between English and Arabic in the utterance construction level and showed that the speakers considered code-switching a sign of prestige and civility.

In informal situations, code-switching can be performed to function a role of administration or management [88]. At the formal level, it can be used for introducing, explaining, commenting, practicing, the target language where the first language of the students is more accessible, more comprehensible and easier to get instructions into for the students.

## **8. Code-switching and Teaching Methods**

Code-switching may be viewed as a twin practice in Grammar-Translation teaching/learning classrooms. It is a common phenomenon in GT foreign language bilingual classes as both teachers and students practice code-switching for a diversity of purposes such as translation of vocabulary, explanation and drilling in the target language grammar and explanation of the grammar rules in the mother language of the students as an easy way to get them through [65, 104]. This common use of code-switching may be understood as the  $L_1$  of the students is used to facilitate the English teaching process and improve the learner's English competence [75, 116]. In bilingual classrooms, where bilingualism prevails as the dominant teaching method, the use of both English and the learners'  $L_1$  can be used judiciously. In these bilingual classes, learners need to work where translation and code-switching are valued skills only when direly needed [109]. The bilingual method also recognizes that many EFL learners need to preserve their cultural and linguistic identities while learning and using English as a foreign language [107].

The Communicative Language Teaching [CLT] is a strictly monolingual approach [86, 70]. Teachers adopting the CLT as their preferred teaching method entertain negative attitudes towards using the learners' mother language in EFL classrooms [85]. However, even in English teaching approaches where the learners' first language is hypothetically advised to be totally circumvented, such as the Communicative Language Teaching [CLT] approach and the Natural Approach [NA] or the Direct Method [DM], there is always some space for code-switching between English and the students' first language to take place inevitably unless the teachers do not speak Arabic [22, 70, 87, 102]. Quite on the contrary, some theorists maintained that code-switching may be used in the CLT classrooms as a facilitative medium of assisting foreign language learning and checking for comprehension and vocabulary acquisition [84].

## **9. Conclusion**

Communicative language teaching pedagogies started to invade schools and take the lead in English education curriculum [95]. Such curriculum and pedagogical designs employed 'authentic texts' from Western cultural contexts that foster English learning inside the classroom and outside of it with permanent learning activities.

Grosjean [38] suggests that a massive number of learners around the world, including Saudi Arabia, are bilingual, especially in countries where there are myriads of multilingual laborers. In Saudi Arabia, those who are in command of both Arabic and English languages tend to code-switch much more frequently. In this respect, Al-Hourani & Afizah [5] rightfully observed that "Arabic-English code switching phenomenon is widely observed among Arab speakers" [p. 40]. Hence arises the importance of researching code-switching in terms of its functions, its merits and demerits in a rich linguistic environment like Saudi Arabia.



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