USE OF CODE-SWITCHING IN FIJIAN ELT CLASSROOMS BY HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMICS: A LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY

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A B S T R A C T

Code-switching is a natural phenomenon that allows educators and learners alike to communicate in a classroom setting, which is multilingual in nature with diverse linguistic backgrounds. Hence, this study has aimed to explore whether higher education academics in English language teaching classrooms incorporate code-switching or not and what are the reasons for their incorporation. To achieve the aims of this study, two research tools were used for data collection namely checklist and observation. The checklist consisted of eleven reasons that are introduced by Gulzar (2010) for code-switching that showed where higher education academics code-switch in their classrooms and in which contexts. On the other hand, lesson observations were made during the participant's classroom teaching and notes were taken. It is envisaged that the aim of code-switching is mainly to transfer the understanding of materials being used in ELT classrooms in the most effective manner. More imperatively, a mixed method research design was used to achieve the results output of the present study. The study has found that code-switching is indeed a spontaneous occurrence that happens naturally, and higher education academic professionals use it as a linguistic tool to assist learners in comprehending difficult nuances. Code-switching worked as a bridge between higher education academics and learners alike.

INTRODUCTION

Whenever there is a communication taking place between two people, code-switching is bound to happen either consciously or subconsciously. For one or many reasons, people do code-switch to ease their understanding of a particular subject and respond to that accordingly. As asserted by Brice (2009), code-switching (henceforth CS) is an unintentional phenomenon that defines a shift from one language to another by the speaker of a language. Mainly, it takes place in a bilingual and multilingual societies to ease the burden amongst the monolinguals, who are not able to communicate in the target language (Cook, 2013). Crucially, these fecund patterns of communication are restricted by the English only policy in the classrooms, and thus are only practiced when the teacher is not present, or indirectly involved in the group discussions (Gulzar, 2010). However, until recently and due to the advancement in e-learning, code-switching is now being considered as an option to be used by many teachers in the ELT classrooms. Learners cannot be simply denied and penalised or punished for using their L_1 in their L_2 classrooms (Ariffin & Rafik-Galea, 2009). CS should be recognised and given all due prominence in the ELT classrooms for the betterment of the learner's comprehension of complex nuances.

Furthermore, this phenomenon is highly prevalent in the educational contexts that allows the teachers and learners alike to switch to their L_1 whenever there is a need. According to Cook (2013) and Timor (2012), the incorporation of learners L_1 should be integrated into the L_2 curriculum, which uses L_2 to facilitate the teaching. Further, this point has gained emphasis from Setati and Adler (2000), who have stated that CS entails a switch by the teachers to learners L_1 as a strategy to harness the understanding of what cannot be understood by them. Most of the CS that takes place in the four walls of a classroom has a precise purpose that is associated to pedagogical objectives. In other words, CS is undeniable, as much as inevitable in an ELT classroom, particularly in a context where teachers and learners share the same L_1 (Fareed, Humayun,

& Akhtar, 2016). Factually, many learners are depended heavily on their L_1 in L_2 classrooms for the paramount reason to understand the teacher and contents. CS works as a guiding tool for all types of learners and higher education academics also consider it as a boon to be used in the ELT classrooms.

In Fijian society, *i-Taukei* and *Fiji-Hindi* is spoken by the vast majority of the people and is country's main languages. The English language, which is nation's lingua franca is used as the medium of instruction in education, law and order, air and sea speak, trade and commerce and so forth (Gulzar, 2010). In regard to learning and teaching, ELT classrooms get affected when learning materials that are used is challenging and beyond learners' comprehension. As such, code-switching is bound to be incorporated in Fijian ESL classrooms if it is used as a teaching strategy and not be considered as a bane. According to Gulzar (2010), there are various reasons for higher education academics to use CS. Some of these reasons include clarification, ease of expression, emphasis, repetitive function, socialising, translation, linguistic competence, checking understanding, giving instructions effectively, topic shifts and create sense of belongingness (Canagarajah, 1995). Basically, all these reasons are considered as the pivotal justifications as why CS takes place in the ELT classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Code-Switching Concept
Different scholars have defined the word code-switching differently. The pioneer of this concept (Gumperz, 1977) defines code-switching as the juxtaposition of passages that belongs to a repertoire of grammatical systems or subsystems that takes place within the same exchange. On the other hand, code-switching refers to instances in which speakers alternate between two languages in a single conversation (Van-Herk, 2012). Subsequently, a change in language form with the same meaning conveyed using a more available word that happens to be from the other language is referred to as code-switching (Moreno, Federmeier, & Kutas, 2002). In simple terms, code-switching allows people to ease their communication and be understood by inserting words and phrases from other languages.

Types of Code-Switching
Tag Switching
This switching takes place as a tag, a brief statement, or a phrase on one speech that works as a filler/s to an utterance of another language. For example, *"tum janta ki nai!"* (You know or not!), *"Arey bhaiya!"* (Oh brother!). Due to tags having no syntactical restrictions, it can be used anywhere in a particular conversation or a sentence, without violating any rules of the grammar. It is confirmed that an addition of tags to a particular utterance does not have any effect on the rest of a phrase (Poplock, 1979). Also, this type of switching is highly common amongst the bilinguals/multilinguals as most of the users apply tag switching almost at the end of all their conversations. It is also known as emblematic or extra-sentential code-switching.

Intra Sentential Switching
Usually, this type of switching is difficult and takes place within a clausal level that contains a phrase, a single word, or across morphemes. As such, it necessitates a considerable amount of effort, which is associated with proficient bilinguals or multilinguals due to phrases from another language that are combined into a single sentence in the native language, which has greatest syntactic risk. In addition, intra sentential switching requires a speaker to be well versed with the grammar of two different languages to prevent the usage of ungrammatical phrases (Nunan, 2001). For example, *"eela word ke isse koi connection haiye nai hai"* (This word has got no connection with this).

Inter Sentential Switching
Mainly, it occurs between the clauses or phrases in which the clause or phrase is written in a different language. As such, it requires the least amount of integration. According to Eldin (2014) and MacSwan (2012), inter sentential code-switching takes place in the same sentence including both the languages. In other words, it posits that the user can apply the rules of grammar for both the languages simultaneously. For example, *"Humme etna kharaab seh piyaas lage hai"* (I am feeling so thirsty).

Reasons for Higher Education Academics Code-switching
There are eleven reasons that prompts higher education academics to use CS in their ELT classrooms (Gulzar, 2010). These are stipulated below:

Clarification
Whenever there is any unfamiliar vocabulary of difficult expressions, higher education academics resorted to CS. As stated by Sert (2005), clarification of meaning made the process of CS quite simple and more effective for day-to-day classroom interaction. Usually, this takes place when learners are not able to comprehend complex sentences.

Ease of Expression
Higher education academics switched between languages because they were able to use simple vocabulary in their L_1 when compared to those used in L_2. This function allowed the knowledge to be transferred and materials being understood well.

Emphasis

When a point/s needed some emphasis, higher education academics used CS either consciously or unconsciously to convey the message effectively and properly.

Repetitive Functions

In this function, higher education academics used L_2 and then repeated what has been said in the L_1. The repetition in the L_1 could be partial or full and is often expanded with further information, but more frequently CS has been used as a repetition of the uttered sentences previously (Flyman-Mattsson and Burenhult, 1999).

Socialising

Through socialisation, CS can be employed towards building good rapport with the students that will encourage them to learn a foreign language, while at the same time making language learning a fun filled activity for all the learners.
Giving instructions effectively - Considered as a common phenomenon, higher education academics used CS to the learners L_1 whenever there was a need to give an order in the most effective way, and to sound 'demanding' so that any work that was given would be done properly.

Translation

It is illustrated that higher education academics often switched between codes to translate the imperative message in the process of explaining grammar points. This translation would mostly be free in form; as literal translation may not be comprehended by the learners.

Linguistic Competence

This reason is considered as a complex notion in an ELT classroom interaction (Flymen-Mattsson and Burenhult, 1999). It is envisaged that it is the responsibility of the higher education academics to convey knowledge of L_2 to the students. Therefore, it is unsuitable to use words that the learners may not have good knowledge about it. The higher education academics need to avoid using such vocabulary, as it might damage the learner's self-confidence in learning the L_2. Also, it would also arise language anxiety that could be considered detrimental in learning L_2.

Checking Understanding

Mainly, teachers' reason in this stance is to check first the learners understanding of their utterances. The emphasis is given to the repetition of function in CS for checking the understanding (Brice, 2000).

Topic Shift

CS for topic shift is a common phenomenon is an ELT classroom interaction. There are two reasons for this: firstly, due to the message's imperativeness, the teacher does not want the learners to misinterpret the messages and secondly, the teacher wants to get the attention of the learners right (Lin, 2013).

Create Sense of Belongingness

To have a meaningful and understanding relationship between the teacher and learners, it is crucial to do CS to maintain the rapport and intimacy with the learners. When CS is allowed, classroom engagement becomes more natural and simpler (Cook, 2001).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study has adopted the qualitative and quantitative research design to explore whether higher education academics in Fijian ELT classrooms utilise CS or not and what are their common reasons for the utilisation. Further, the study also tends to show whether there are any differences between higher education academics, who teach linguistics and those who teach literature of their use of CS. This study ought to give an accurate stance on the types, nature and the reasons of CS that is utilised by higher education academics in the ELT classrooms. Further, the teaching academics will put greater emphasis on the acts of CS and apply it as specifically when there is a need to be fully understood.

More imperatively, this study will also pave directions for the future research to be conducted in the same line, however with an innovative CS outcome in the accelerating L_2 learning ambience. The research questions stipulated below have worked as the rudiments to collate the overall findings of this study:

- Do higher education academics utilise CS during ELT interactions?
- What are the most common and least reason for CS by higher education academics?
- Are there any differences between language and literature teaching staff use of CS?

Additionally, the study ought to give an accurate stance on the types, nature and the reasons of CS that is utilised by higher education academics in the ELT classrooms. Further, the teaching academics will put greater emphasis on the acts of CS and apply it as specifically when there is a need to be fully understood. More imperatively, this study will also pave directions for the future research to be conducted in the same line, however with an innovative CS outcome in the accelerating L_2 learning ambience.

To achieve the aims of this study, the researcher utilised two types of instruments to collect the data: checklist and observation. The checklist consisted of eleven reasons of CS that showed where do higher education academics did CS (Gulzar, 2010), while on the other hand, observation was conducted after taking the permission in the teaching classes that

were conducted by a staff.

In totality, there were fifteen participants who were higher education academics of linguistics and literature that were selected for this study. They were all teaching in one university of Fiji but at different campuses. Mainly, these higher education academics were selected as all of them had a master's degree or a PhD in English language teaching and literature. Either Fiji Hindi or i-Taukei language was their mother tongue, English was their L_2. In the process of teaching, each participant was observed taking into consideration of the eleven reasons of CS as stipulated by Gulzar (2010). All the data was collected through observations of the classroom teaching by the higher education academics.

RESULTS

The tabulated analysis below shows the observations of the higher education academics of a Fijian university that employed CS during their classroom teaching. The table contains the reasons for CS and the frequencies for each switching that took place in a classroom.

Table 1. Code-switching frequencies by higher education academics in percentages

Reasons	Count and Percentages	Literature	Linguistics	Totals
Clarification	Count	14	11	25
	% horizontal	56.00%	44.00%	100.00%
	% vertical	15.9%	16.2%	16.04%
Ease of expression	Count	13	10	23
	% horizontal	56.52%	43.48%	100.00%
	% vertical	14.8%	14.7%	14.74%
Emphasis	Count	7	6	13
	% horizontal	53.85%	46.15%	100.00%
	% vertical	8.0%	8.8%	8.39%
Repetitive functions	Count	5	4	9
	% horizontal	55.56%	44.44%	100.00%
	% vertical	5.7%	5.9%	5.78%
Socialising	Count	8	5	13
	% horizontal	61.54%	38.46%	100.00%
	% vertical	9.1%	7.4%	8.22%
Translation	Count	9	8	17
	% horizontal	52.94%	47.06%	100.00%
	% vertical	10.2%	11.8%	11.00%
Linguistic competence	Count	1	1	2
	% horizontal	50.00%	50.00%	100.00%
	% vertical	1.1%	1.5%	1.30%
Checking understanding	Count	4	3	7
	% horizontal	57.14%	42.86%	100.00%
	% vertical	4.5%	4.4%	4.48%
Giving instructions effectively	Count	12	9	21
	% horizontal	57.14%	42.86%	100.00%
	% vertical	13.6%	13.2%	13.44%
Topic shift	Count	10	7	17
	% horizontal	58.82%	41.18%	100.00%
	% vertical	13.6%	13.2%	13.43%
Create sense of belongingness	Count	3	2	5
	% horizontal	60.00%	40.00%	100.00%
	% vertical	3.4%	2.9%	3.18%
Totals	Count	88	68	156
	% horizontal	56.41%	43.59%	100.00%
	% vertical	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

DISCUSSIONS

According to the data postulated above (see table 1), it is indicated that clarification is the most used reasonable excuse for higher education academics of L_2 to utilise their L_1 to assist the learners in understanding confusing concepts. However, they mostly utilised L_2 for teaching but transferred the code into L_1, whenever the need aroused.

The second most ranked reason was ease of expression, as it aimed to transfer the materials of complex knowledge to be understood in the most effective way. Again, the need for L_1 is highly imperative here to make learners accommodative in the ELT classrooms.

Giving out instructions to learners so that they can understand it effectively is another reason of high importance that is ranked third on the figure above. It is common as much as obvious for higher education academics to switch between learners L_1 to impart instructions.

The higher education academics employed CS to translate the essential messages to elucidate new vocabulary and grammatical rules. Hence, this has been ranked fourth as it benefits the learners towards reducing comprehension burden and further assists them to remain focused on the gist of the that has been conveyed.

To teach complex grammar concepts and other associated materials, higher education academics used their L_1 for a topic shift so that learners were able to understand. While it was challenging as much as difficult to grasp the complex grammar concepts and other associated materials, a topical shift has allowed an ease for the higher education academics to

make learners understanding easier. This was ranked fifth on the figure depicted above.

The sixth most reason on the figure stated above is emphasis, which is utilised by higher education academics to convey the messages properly and effectively. According to Eldridge (1996), "messages are reinforced, emphasised and clarified where the messages have already been transmitted in one code but misunderstood".
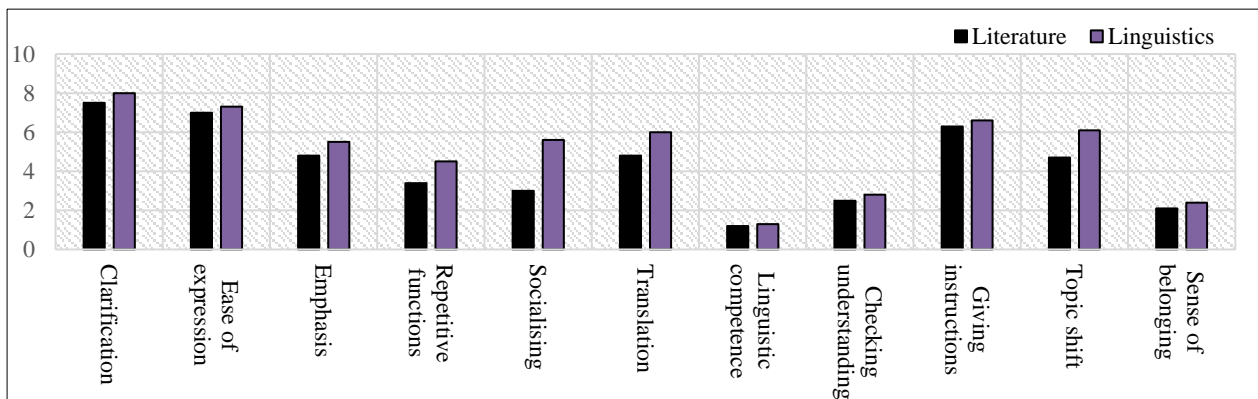

Figure1. Code-switching frequencies by higher education academics

The higher education academics switched codes for socialising purposes as well. This is ranked seventh on the figure above. By engaging in socialisation, they tend to build an everlasting rapport with their learners, which in return creates a sense of belongingness.

By repeating the speech in the L_1, which is preceded by the target language, this has allowed the higher education academics to align the meaning of two different languages. This shows that the teaching academics have utilised CS for repetition purpose which ranks eighth on the figure above.

Another imperative reason to check the comprehension of the student's prompted CS by higher education academics. On the figure above, it is ranked ninth. This function is utilised to determine the level of understating of the materials that are being used as teaching aid.

The higher education professional's code switched to show their expression of feelings as if he/she was one of them. By having this sense of belongingness, CS has contributed towards creating a supportive and conducive ambience for ELT to be executed effectively. This was ranked second last on the figure.

The least reasoned function of CS that was utilised by the higher education academics was linguistic competence. All the participants were area specialist in linguistics and literature, though they have English as their L_2, and they had good number of teaching experience.

Generally, the figure 1 stipulated on top has shown that the higher education academics utilised CS for almost all the reasons that Gulzar (2010) has mentioned. For any ESL teacher whose L_1 is not English are bound to switch codes for all the reasons mentioned above in an ELT classroom. Factually, this makes their work easier to impart the L_2 knowledge easily, and for the learners to comprehend complex nuances to the best of their ability.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, this study has revealed that code-switching has been valued in accelerating ESL/EFL learning, particularly when it is utilised for the purpose and awareness for which it has been adopted and employed for. As per the results of this study, it was found out that code-switching was utilised for several reasons irrespective of the topics that were being taught in linguistics and literature classrooms. The most common function that was utilised by the higher education academics to use code-switching in their teaching was clarification, while the least was linguistic competence.

However, whatever reasons are stated by Gulzar (2010) and including the findings of this study above, all these reasons tend to transfer the knowledge from materials in the most effective way that can be easily comprehended by the learners. This is further supported by Wardhaugh (2021), who has claimed that the code-switching has the power to facilitate greater comprehension and cohere the classroom population in the lesson execution. Indeed, code-switching is considered as a boon and not a bane in the Fijian ELT classrooms, as it has been taken in as a language learning strategical tool by higher education academics.

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