

## IS CODE SWITCHING BENEFICIAL IN A BILINGUALISM CLASSROOM? A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHERS' PERCEPTION

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### **Abstract:**

*This study investigates the role and perception of code-switching (CS) among English language teachers in bilingual classrooms in Pakistan. Code-switching, defined as the use of more than one language within a single discourse, is often employed by teachers to facilitate understanding and improve communication among students. Despite its controversial nature, many educators recognize its educational benefits. Through qualitative semi-structured interviews with ten highly qualified teachers possessing MS and PhD degrees in English linguistics, the research explores teachers' beliefs regarding the advantages of code-switching as a pedagogical strategy. Key themes identified include comprehension enhancement, increased student engagement, and the importance of cultural context. Findings suggest that code-switching not only aids in vocabulary acquisition and reduces language anxiety, but also fosters a supportive learning environment. While teachers emphasize the necessity of moderation to prevent over-reliance on native language, they assert that code-switching is a valuable tool that addresses the diverse proficiency levels of students. Ultimately, the study aims to provide insightful information that can guide English language educators in effectively utilizing code-switching to enhance teaching and learning outcomes in multilingual classrooms.*

### **Introduction:**

English language education is highly valued by the government through its department. In classroom practice, teachers are trained to teach high-quality English. Learning a second or foreign language only allows for high quality classroom input for students to learn. In English classroom, teachers face several challenges in classroom interaction. English teachers can switch from English to Native language (or vice versa) during teaching. This practice is known as code-switching and is done to facilitate teaching and learning among the participants in the classroom. Code Switching (CS) is a natural part of bilingualism and is a common feature used by those who have developed two or more languages. This phenomenon is known as code-switching or code integration. CS is used all over the world to communicate. The work of Moghadam et al suggest that the use of CS in conversation is a common practice in international communication for many reasons and is a misunderstanding.

However, the use of CS in classroom is controversial. In cases where there is no impairment in the use of the target language, it is considered a bad and unwanted behavior. CS is also a sign of language laziness. In contrast to the above, some researchers argued that in classroom contexts, CS is effective to assist in the teaching and learning of English. Code-switching cannot be considered an error problem, but a bilingual resource. In addition, it helps the less intelligent students to understand better, especially when it shows the classroom methods. Code-switching should not be seen as a sign of failure in the English classroom, but it is a valid strategy used by teachers.

The proposed definition of code switching has been defined by many researchers. For Gumpers, CS is the event in a single communication of speech fragments belonging to two or more different grammatical systems. Code-switching can also be seen as a different use of the same language. Code-switching also refers to the use of more than one language in the same speech segment, in a conversation, or in a sentence.

There are many ways to modify the code. It occurs in a sentence, at the beginning or end of a sentence. At the syntactic level, Poplack identifies three

different types of code-switching, which are labeling, inter-switching and intra-switching. Gumpers also introduces CS terms in a situational (participant exchange) and a metaphor (subject exchange) context. Another grammarian, Lin classifies code switching into reciprocal switching and mixed switching. Code-switching has also been found in English language teaching (ELT). Some of these studies were at the primary school level and others at the higher education level. At secondary level, Selmat studied CS in a Malaysian ESL (English as a Second Language) class. He found that most teachers and students expressed a positive attitude toward code-switching in the classroom and saw its educational benefits as an effective teaching and learning resource. Canagarajah studied CS in an ESL class in Jaffna. It summarizes the classification of CS in the classroom into classroom management and content delivery. In addition to CS in the English classroom, Ferguson suggested that there are three functional areas of CS in the classroom context of curriculum integration, classroom management, and interpersonal relationships.

This research is similar to the problem, especially in the English-only classroom where frustration occurs because the students do not understand the input. Current research also believes that the use of CS in the English classroom by teachers can directly transfer the required skills to students. Therefore, this study aims to investigate, Is code switching beneficial in bilingual classroom and the perception of teachers about it. Specifically, it aims to explore teachers' beliefs and opinions about using code switching as a teaching tool to teach English in bilingual classrooms. We hope that this study can provide information to English language teachers.

### **Research Objectives :**

- 1.To explore the benefits teachers associate with code switching.
- 2.To explore teachers belief's and opinions about using code switching.

### **Research Questions:**

- 1.What benefits do teachers associate with code switching among students in terms of language development and communication?
- 2.What are the teacher's beliefs and opinions about using code switching?

### **Literature Review :**

Code-switching is defined as “a phenomenon of switching from one language to another in the same discourse” (Nunan and Carter, 2001, p.275). For Gardner-Chloros (2009) and Levine (2011), it is “the systematic alternate

use of two or more languages in a single utterance or conversational exchange for communicative purposes.” Code switching (CS) is observed in teachers' and students'

discourse in language classrooms. As Iyitoglu (2015) states, teachers do not code-switch consciously. Supporting this view, Sert (2005) questions whether the teachers are aware of the functions and outcomes of the code-switching process or not.

“Teachers’ code-switching has been up for debate since it is sometimes performed subconsciously and automatically (Modupeola, 2013, p.93) rather than as an intentional teaching strategy.” As Sert (2005) states, code-switching in language classroom does not block learning a language, but can be considered as a useful strategy in classroom discourse when the aim of the teacher is to clarify the meaning and help students comprehend the topic efficiently. He warns that when students interact with native speakers, it becomes a barrier that prevents long-term understanding. "The teacher has a lot to do to prevent his long-term damage to foreign language learning" (Seret, 2005, p. 5). For Liu et al. (2004) there are two main views on the use of code-switching: one opposes code-switching to L1 and prefers to use only L2 in the classroom, the other supports code-switching and using L1 to some extent. in the classroom. According to Sert (2005, p.4), "Teachers who prefer to use communicative methods in language teaching are opposed to the various uses of dominant language while teaching in the classroom". Similarly, (Turnbull and Arnett, 2002, p. 206) states that "the teacher's use of target language in the classroom

should be emphasized, and this is a logical step because teachers are the The main source of information about the language. The language. However, some researchers suggest that switching to L1 can be beneficial (Gabrielatos, 2001; Levine, 2011; Cook, 2001; van Lier, 1995; Macaro, 2001, 2005) and using strict and limited From L1 to be used (Gabrilatos, 2001). Based on this claim, Cook (2012) believes that code-switching is natural in the language classroom and teachers should not disturb the students to use does not mean to avoid L1" (Bilgin, 2016, p.688). Macaro (2001, p.535) says that using L1 can save time, not using the target language. Similarly, van Leer (1995) suggests that students' use of the L1 can be encouraged to be more reflective of the model. For Levin (2011), two or more languages are included in the L2 learning program because the language class is multilingual, and this information should be taken into account when examining the content of the language class. Similarly, Kirkpatrick (2014, p. 218) states that “code-switching is a way of communication between two languages that is impossible. Therefore, it is not common to use only one language in a multilingual classroom. In addition, Setati et al. (2002), code switching can support students' communication skills and ability to communicate and learn in the classroom.

In terms of the functions of code switching, there have been many studies conducted in bilingual, multilingual, ESL or EFL contexts (e.g., Sert, 2005; Iyitoglu, 2015; Greggio and Gil, 2007; Raman and Yigitoglu, 2018; Rukh, Saleem, Javeed and Mehmood, 2014; Zabrodjkaja, 2007; Ferguson, 2003, 2009).

Ferguson (2003, 2009) put forward a framework for the pedagogical functions of classroom code-switching which includes: “(1) code-switching for constructing and expressing knowledge access, for scaffolding knowledge, explantaion of key L2 technical terms and mediation of L2 textbooks; (2) code-switching for classroom management, for indicating a shift, managing students’ behavior such as: motivating, disciplining, and praising them; and (3) code-switching for interpersonal relations to create more humanistic classrooms” (Cahyani, Courcy and Barnett, 2018, p.467).

One of the functions of teachers’ code-switching is facilitating understanding of grammatical structures and rules. It explains “a situation where a teacher changes his/her language according to the topic under discussion” (Iyitoglu, 2015, p.261). Sert (2005) points out that the teacher changes his/her language to the students’ native language in dealing with certain grammar points taught at that moment. In a study of Portuguese language university students learning

English, Greggio and Gil (2007) reported that the teacher switched codes from L2 to L1 to explain the understanding of grammatical structure and encourage students to think in The form is subject to analytical and management guidelines. . Derek Bergsleithner (2002) found that language learners use code switching to improve their self-expression, and code switching is used to understand grammatical concepts.

Another role of teachers' code-switching can be seen in creating a supportive language environment in the classroom and maintaining order. According to Sert (2005), the teacher switches codes to create a close relationship with the students. Zabrodjkaja (2007) found that the teacher switched to L1 to praise or talk to the student. Carrying out a study on beginner-level EFL learners, Braga (2000) found out that code switching was used to create a more comfortable atmosphere in the EFL classroom by using humor.

Teachers also employ code-switching to repeat what they say in L2 to clarify the meaning. For Cipriani (2001), code switching fostered oral participation among the teacher and learner, and it is used to make the meaning of vocabulary clear, give instruction in carrying out tasks and to encourage learners to speak in English. However, Sert (2005, p.3) warns that "this tendency to repeat the instruction in L1 may cause the learners lose their motivation to listen to the instruction in L2."

The last function of code-switching is for establishing effective communication. For Iyitoglu (2015), most of the time, it is the teaching method which should be

adjusted and not the language of instruction, and the most crucial question is how appropriately L1 is used and how it can be used to foster learning of L2.

### **Methodology:**

The present study used a qualitative research design.10 interviews were conducted from University teachers.Teachers are very high qualified completed MS and Phd in English linguistics from Universities LahorePakistan.Qualitative research focuses on understanding concepts, thoughts, or experiences. It involves collecting non-numerical data, such as interviews, open-ended surveys, and observations. Qualitative research aims to provide insights into people's motivations, feelings, and behaviors, often exploring the "why" behind phenomena.Quantitative Research involves collecting numerical data that can be quantified and analyzed statistically. It often includes structured surveys, experiments, and measurements. Quantitative research aims to identify patterns, test theories, and make predictions. It answers questions like "how many?" or "to what extent?" by using statistical tools to analyze the data.Mixed Methods Research combines both qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem. By integrating both types of data, researchers can capitalize on the strengths of each method. For example, a study might begin with qualitative interviews to explore a topic and then follow up with a quantitative survey to quantify the findings.Researchers conducted semi structured interviews.Structured Interviews are like a strict questionnaire. The interviewer asks the same set of questions in the same order to everyone. Most of the questions have specific answers, like "yes" or "no." This makes it easy to compare answers later.Semi- Structured Interviews are more relaxed. The interviewer has a list of questions but can change the order or ask extra questions based on what the person says. This way, they can dive deeper into interesting topics and get more detailed answers.

**Codes and themes**

Theme		Code	Explanation
Positive effect of code switching		Language Comprehension	Participants noted that code switching helps students understand complex concepts and vocabulary better.
		Engagement	Code switching increases student engagement and interest in the classroom.
		Cultural Relevance	Using multiple languages reflects students' cultural backgrounds, making learning more relatable.
		Clarifying Difficult Concepts	Code switching is used to explain challenging ideas more effectively.
		Increased Participation	Students are more likely to participate in discussions when they can use their native language.
Negative Effects of Code Switching		Confusion	Some participants believe frequent code switching might lead to confusion and reduce language proficiency among more advanced students.
		Dependency on L1	Over-reliance on the first language could hinder the development of skills in the target language, especially among students at higher academic levels.

		Lack of Preparation for English Proficiency	Some participants indicated that code switching, especially at advanced levels (BS, MS, PhD), may not adequately prepare students for a purely English-speaking environment.
Contextual Influences		Student Proficiency Level	The impact of code switching varies according to the proficiency level of the students (beginner vs. advanced).
		Educational Context	The context (primary, secondary, tertiary education) influences views on code switching effectiveness.
Teacher's Role		Facilitator of Understanding	Teachers code switch to bridge gaps in students' comprehension and to maintain engagement during lessons.
		Comfort and Rapport	Code switching is often used to create a comfortable learning atmosphere and help students feel more at ease.
Language Use Patterns		Predominant use of L1	Students often prefer to switch to their native language when unsure how to express themselves in the target language (English).
		Code-Switching in Phrasing	Students tend to code switch in shorter phrases

			rather than full sentences, particularly in informal contexts despite the need for clarity in formal presentations.
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**Data Collection:**

Data collection for the present study employed a qualitative research design involving semi-structured interviews with ten highly qualified English language teachers from various universities in Lahore, Pakistan. All participants hold advanced degrees (MS and PhD) in English linguistics, ensuring a depth of expertise in the subject matter. The choice of semi-structured interviews allowed researchers to gather rich, qualitative data while also permitting flexibility in the discussion. Each interview was designed to elicit detailed insights into the teachers' perceptions and beliefs regarding code-switching in bilingual classrooms. The interviews were conducted in a conversational manner, enabling participants to expand on their responses and share their experiences and opinions related to the use of code-switching as a pedagogical strategy. This method facilitated an in-depth exploration of themes such as language comprehension, engagement, and the cultural relevance of code-switching, as well as potential negative effects and contextual influences. The qualitative nature of the collected data provided a nuanced understanding of how code-switching operated within the classroom dynamics and its broader implications for teaching and learning in multilingual settings.

**Results and Discussion :**

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed several key results regarding the role of code-switching (CS) in bilingual classrooms, particularly from the perspectives of highly qualified English language teachers in Lahore, Pakistan. A predominant theme identified was the positive effect of code-switching on language comprehension. Participants noted that CS effectively aids students in grasping complex concepts and vocabulary, thereby enhancing their understanding of the subject matter. This finding is consistent with existing literature suggesting that code-switching can serve as a bridge for students, allowing them to make connections between their native language and the target language, English. Furthermore, the interviews underscored the importance of engagement as a significant benefit of CS. Teachers observed that employing multiple languages in discourse not only increased student interest but also encouraged participation, as students felt more comfortable contributing to discussions when they could express themselves in their native language.

Cultural relevance emerged as another vital theme. Many teachers articulated that code-switching mirrors the cultural backgrounds of their students, rendering lessons more relatable and meaningful. This acknowledgment of students' linguistic diversity was seen as an essential pedagogical strategy that fosters inclusivity and respect for students' identities. Code-switching was also employed as a tool for clarifying difficult concepts, with teachers using it to explain challenging topics more effectively. This aligns with the idea that code-switching can act as a valuable instructional resource that supports learning when addressing complicated material.

Conversely, the study also identified negative perceptions surrounding code-switching. Some participants expressed concerns about potential confusion arising from frequent switching, particularly among more advanced students. This fear is rooted in the belief that over-reliance on the first language (L1) might impede the development of proficiency in English over time and could hinder students' preparedness for purely English-speaking environments, particularly at advanced academic levels. Thus, while teachers recognized the benefits of CS, they also emphasized the importance of moderation and the necessity to avoid fostering dependency on L1, particularly for higher-level learners.

Contextual influences also played a significant role in shaping teachers' views on code-switching. The interviews revealed that the effectiveness of code-switching is often contingent upon students' proficiency levels, with varied perspectives based on whether students are beginners or advanced learners. Additionally, the educational context—ranging from primary to tertiary education—was identified as a critical factor influencing attitudes towards the use of code-switching. Teachers in primary education often endorsed more frequent use of CS, while those in tertiary settings exhibited more caution, emphasizing the need for greater proficiency in English.

Lastly, the role of the teacher as a facilitator of understanding emerged as a crucial aspect of the discussion. Participants described their use of code-switching as a means to help bridge gaps in comprehension and cultivate a supportive learning environment. By employing CS, teachers aimed to create a comfortable atmosphere that fostered rapport and encouraged student participation. This dual focus on academic support and emotional reassurance highlighted the multifaceted role of the teacher in multilingual classrooms, showcasing their adaptability in catering to diverse student needs.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the study reveals that code-switching is a valuable pedagogical strategy used by English language teachers in bilingual classrooms in Pakistan. The teachers believe that code-switching enhances language comprehension, increases student engagement, and makes learning more relatable and meaningful by incorporating students' cultural backgrounds. While some teachers expressed concerns about potential negative effects, such as confusion and over-reliance on the native language, they also emphasized the importance of moderation and the need to avoid dependency on the native language. The study highlights the significance of considering contextual factors, such as student proficiency levels and educational context, when using code-switching. Overall, the findings suggest that code-switching can be a beneficial tool for teachers to facilitate understanding, create a supportive learning environment, and cater to diverse student needs.

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