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EXPLORING REASONS OF CODE-SWITCHING AMONG EFL LEARNERS: A CASE STUDY OF TAKHAR UNIVERSITY OF AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current research was to seek the reasons that EFL learners commit code-switching at Takhar University in Afghanistan. The present study applied mixed method design (qualitative and quantitative). The study respondents were twenty bilingual EFL learners at the English department of Takhar University. The researcher used semi-structured interview instrument for gathering data. The result of the research revealed that the leading reason for code-switching of EFL learners was inadequacy in English language. The next considerable reasons which caused EFL learners code-switching were retaining secrecy, first language speaking easiness contrasted to speaking in English, preventing misapprehension, and incompetence with identical words in English. Hence, it was identified that code-switching is a drastic and advantageous mode applied by FL learners so that clarify and convey their aimed messages and lore to other learners in their communications in the classroom. The present research purveys some suggestions for English teachers, curriculum makers and English learners.

Keywords: English language, code-switching, EFL learners, reason

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INTRODUCTION

Code-switching is defined as incorporating terms or phrases together from two languages while speaking or writing ((Al-Qaysi, 2019). Pertaining this, the second name for a code is a language or dialect. The change of expressions and words between two tongues is called code-switching. According to Basabrin (2019), code-switching often occurs between speakers that share particular codes. Weinreich (1986) described code-switching as using two languages alternatively. Code-switching takes place at the time that in the same sentences two languages are applied (Marasigan, 1983). According to Bokomba (1989), code-switching refers to blending of utterances from two different grammatical principles. Besides, Myers-Scotton (2002) stated that the varieties of two languages' components happen in the same area which one of the tongues operates as the morph syntactic structure of the code-switching. Myers –Scotton (2012), claimed that code-switching comes in various forms. It likely happens at the onset, center and at the finish point of a sentence. Intra-sentential and inter-sentential switching are the types of code-switching. According to Lip-ski (1985), sentence boundaries experience switching a language component which belongs to inter-sentential code-switching. Chiefly capable bilingual speakers carry out this kind of code-switching; but when a change happens in the middle of a sentence without any stop to reveal a change is related to intra-sentential code-switching. Inter-sentential code-switching is an automatic language shift that happens accidentally exchanging for unfamiliar words in a tongue. Code-switching can be vastly seen in classes that learners come from distinct language backgrounds. In speaking or writing, individuals who speak two languages from various backgrounds of language easily change their codes at different topics. Cahyani et al., (2018), stated that speakers often shift their code in the process of their daily switch. A large number of eloquent learned English speakers mostly switch their code via integrating English words, terms or sentences into their communications. Code-switching occurs due to a reason though it likely to be carried out unknowingly. Code-switching can be recognized by some factors related to socio-linguistic. People with different languages and cultures do code-switching with a large extent. (Fachriyah, 2017; Paramesravan & Lim, 2018). According to Song (2019), bilingual speakers in some Asian countries such as Pakistan, India, China, and Malaysia learn English and employ it as their

second tongue whereas their first tongue is the tongue of their regions. Hence, language shift as a general process is prevalent in the communities where English language and other codes are mixed in phrases. Xiaofang (2017), claimed that code-switching is extremely common in many context.

Problem Statement

According to Sert (2016), instructors and learners employ code-switching in their communications while they are in the classes. Based on the argument of researchers, ESL instructors and linguists, code-switching is not mainly a defect or barrier in the system of inter-language. There are different reasons that bilingual speakers shift their codes one after one in their speeches and communications. Researchers are keen in language shift to display the reasons that bilingual speakers frequently like to apply phrases and terms from two languages one by one in a certain circumstance (Luo, 2019; Shanehsazzadeh & Heidari Darani, 2017). The reasons affecting code-switching applied by bilingual students learning English as a second or foreign language have not been explored by investigators although many studies were conducted on code-switching (Bhatti1 et al., 2018). Studying the reasons of code-switching in the context of Afghanistan, particularly in the English department is essential because the learners use code-switching while learning English language.

Objective of Research

This study aimed to explore the reasons that affect code-switching employed by EFL learners who are bilingual speakers and study in the English department at Takhar University.

Research Question

What are the reasons that affect code-switching among EFL learners who are bilingual speakers and study in the English department at Takhar University?

Research Methodology

Design of Research

The design of this study was mixed-method. Mixed-method design is classified into exploratory design, explanatory design, and triangulation design (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2016). From the stated designs, the current study used exploratory design that the data were collected, transcribed, coded and analyzed in qualitative mode and after that measured in quantitative way estimating the frequency of the events.

Research Participants

There were 20 EFL learners who were bilingual speakers included in the study as the participants. The participants were from various ethnic backgrounds. The respondents were both form male and female gender equally. The respondents were aged between 18 and 30. They were chosen arbitrary.

Instrument of Data Collection

Semi-structured interview was used for data collection. The researcher informed the respondents that their responses are just used for the aim of the study and their confidentiality is kept safe. The researcher granted the interviewees sufficient time to share their perspectives and ideas. The researcher conducted the interview in the English language. The data were recorded, transcribed, coded and analyzed.

Analysis of Data

First of all, the collected data were transcribed. After that, the researcher analyzed the data qualitatively. In qualitative analysis, based on Braun and Clarks (2006) analytical method thematic analysis was run. The researcher read the transcribed data three times to recognize the collected data. Then the researcher located the recognized data into suitable titles and subtitles. Next, the researcher analyzed and mingled the codes to make relevant sections. The investigator reviewed and purified the made sections to make a proper thematic scheme. The categories were defined and refined again in order to reach to surety that each specified section can analyze the data effectively. According to Neuman (2014), in quantitative analysis for gaining meanings, it is entailed to utilize numerical data. Following doing the quantitative analyzing of the data gathered in the current research, the results of the study were computed and illustrated in the table as frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of the study, the respondents expressed various factors for their code-switching in their oral communications. Table 1 shows the reasons that led the participants of the study to code-switching are listed orderly and they are as follow: 1- incompetence in the second language, 2- lack of English word reserve, 3-more comfortable to speak in native tongue, 4-attracting attention, 5- feasible factors, 6-filling the gap in speaking, 7-presenting sincerity, 8-preventing misapprehension, 9-

emphasizing, 10- maintaining reclusion. The bellow table displays various societal reasons that lad the study respondents to commit code-switching (see Table 1).

The interviews' respondents' distinct reasons for code-switching illustrated in the above table. Based on the illustration of the findings in the mentioned table, second language incompetence is the first reason for code-switching that contains 26% of the factors. After that, lack of English word reserve is the second reason of code-switching that comprises 19% of the cases. As it is shown in the table, the following societal reasons for employing of code-switching in the current research are: more comfortable to speak in native tongue (12%), catching attention (10%), feasible factors (9%), filling the gap in speaking(7%), imparting sincerity (6%), preventing misapprehension(5%), emphasizing an issue (4%), and keeping reclusion(2%) sequentially,

Incompetence of Second Language

The researcher asked the interviewees the reasons that they perform code-switch in the class. Most of the respondents (15 from 20) stated that they are lack of competence in L2. Hence, lack of proficiency in the second language was detected as the initial and most influential cause of code-switch among the respondents of the study.

Lack of English Word Reserve

Lack of English word reserve or knowledge is the second remarkable reason of code-switching based on the data report. A large number of the participants expressed that they have not English word knowledge. Thus, they are obliged to commit code-switching to their native language. Most of the interviewees declared that for making the atmosphere of the class fascinating and enjoyable, code-switching is essential.

More Comfortable to Speak in Native Tongue

Based on the finding of the study, the third considerable reason of code-switching is speaking easiness in the native tongue. As a result, 12% of the respondents expressed that speaking in their own tongue was easier for them in comparison to speaking in English language. As one example, one of the learners as the participant said that most of his Afghan classmates could not get his point when he spoke English because of his accent and using complex words. Therefore, he preferred to speak in his native tongue.

Catching Attention

The next reason of code-switching stated by the respondents of the study is catching the attention of the listeners in the communication. Nearly 10% of the participants spoke regarding this reason. For instance, one participant stated that at the start of his speech he used English sentence “Hello Everyone” to catch the attention of his classmates, and then he switched to his native language.

Feasible Factors

There is assumption that speakers likely switch their languages so that get the attention of listeners to communicational topics because interchanging of two codes paves the way for more understanding of communicators. Based on the result, 9% of the respondents expressed that one of the major reasons of their code-switching is feasible factors.

Filling the Gap in Speaking

The respondents of the study declared that when they had interruption and gap during speaking, they used their first language to compensate the interruptions and stopgaps. Students used code-switching as a useful strategy for absence of second language fluency in order to prevent the gaps in communication. Therefore, 7% of the respondents stated that they resorted to code-switching because of filling the speaking’s gap.

Imparting Sincerity

Another remarkable reason of code-switching that was pointed out by some of the participants is imparting sincerity. Nearly 6% of the participants stressed the significance of this cause in shifting code.

Preventing Misapprehension

Based on the result of the study, 5% of the interviewees declared that they committed code-switching so that prevent misapprehension when they encountered to lack of similar phrases or terms in English language. Also, lack of fluency of students in English in comparison to their own languages was another factor of code-switching among them. Students who had not enough expertise in English language constantly faced to difficulty in using suitable equivalent words and terms in first and second languages. Hence, they had to switch to their mother tongue at the time of speaking in English so that keep the communication on. The mentioned factor among the

participants who were learning English can be ascribed to linguistic inability of them in new language speaking.

Emphasizing an issue and keeping reclusion

One of the influential causes that led learners to use code-switch was emphasizing an issue that is regarded a noticeable reason in the study of a language. 4% of the respondents declared that the reason for their code-switching was emphasizing on an issue. Hence, the learners used a repetition strategy to convey the meaning of their speech to the interlocutors easily. Speakers use repetition as a particular technique of language interchange because of two reasons: Initially, the speaker might could not convey the meaning correctly in the target tongue as it was expected. Secondly, the speakers might use code-switching because he/she thought that they could not communicate the points to the listeners very well. The interviewees declared as well that they used repetition technique in code-switching to emphasize in the L2 in order that the listeners get their points and be influenced profoundly.

The final reason which is considered the least important cause of language-switching is keeping reclusion. Among the interviewees, just one of them stated that he used code-switching in the class thinking that his other students in the classroom might not get what he conveyed to them.

Table 1. Reasons for EFL Bilingual English Learners Code-Switching

Reasons	Number	Percentage
Incompetence in second language	15	26%
Lack of English word reserve	10	19%
More comfortable to speak in native tongue	7	12%
Catching attention	6	10%
Feasible factors	5	9%
Filling the gap in speaking	5	7%
Imparting sincerity	4	6%
Preventing misapprehension	3	5%
Emphasizing an issue	2	4%
Keeping reclusion	1	2%
Total	58	100%

CONCLUSION

Code-switching happens when a speaker changes between two or more languages while speaking. The results of the current research reveal that the leading reason of code-switching among EFL learners is incompetence in the second tongue. Other mentioned causes of code-switching are: lack of English word reserve, more comfortable to speak in native tongue, drawing attention of audience, feasible factors, filling the gap in speaking, imparting sincerity, preventing misapprehension, Emphasizing an issue and Keeping reclusion. Hence, it is inferable that code-switching normally occurs among bilingual speakers for various reasons. The factors of code-switching among the respondents based on the frequency were different. Based on the purposes, necessities, and places and willing of learners, reasons of code-switching obviously vary. Similarly, Skiba (2012) stated that lack of competence of learners to express and convey their speech to others in one language is one of the main reasons of code-switching that assist to keep the duration of speaking. Accordingly, a supportive element helping to exchange ideas and information in societal communication and transfer sense well is code-switching.

The present study offers some suggestions for learning a language because based on the findings of the research code-switching is a helpful factor in learning second tongue. When instructors teach, they should understand that it is interaction of bilingual speakers that cause to code switching, and it functions as an effective means for imparting the points in case applied well in speaking. According to Koylu (2018), in different situations an instructor as a useful tactic might ask learners to exchange code so that become proficient in the target tongue. Grant and Nguyen (2017), argued that in some cases code-switching might create an incompatible relation between the language community and speakers. It is for the reason that expressions and words from code exchange likely not contain position, worthy and role in the cultures' of speakers. For example, in some civilized settings, using local tongues in informal and ordinary interactions might be considered inferior. Onga and Zhang (2018), stated that other times students concentrate on presenting the right responses in the English courses in order to indicate that they have become proficient in the second language. In addition, exchanging code might be used to clarify the meaning of an unfamiliar word or term. Learner's trend to employ code switching as it might uplift

their proficiency in English in case it is not used in a vast extent. Moreover, the language instructors possibly manage and teach the class more effectively provided that they are familiar with learners' native language (Garcia et al., 2018). In brief, if the purpose of the code-exchanger is to convey the intended meaning further apparently and transmit the points to learners in a better method, code exchange can function as a beneficial tactics in classroom communications.

The current research sought reasons that influence code-switch among EFL learners at Takhar University, Afghanistan. This topic should be studied in educational contexts of other states. This study was limited to Takhar University. The next same study should include participants from other universities of the country to enrich the future study. In this study, interview instrument was used. For future study, questionnaire tool should be used to collect more data and boost the generalization of the study findings.

List of abbreviations

EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

ESL (English as a Second Language)

Declaration Statement Section

Ethical Approval

This research paper was reviewed by two English language and literature lecturers. The researchers followed the guidelines for writing the research paper used at research committee of Takhar University. The researchers used a consent letter for gaining the consent of research participants for collecting data. The researchers are delighted to publish this research paper in Discover Education Journal.

Competing Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Author's Contribution

BD conducted, wrote and analyzed the data of the research. MAO wrote the discussion and analyzed the data and revised the paper for further improvement; and SAA collected the data and revised the paper.

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