

REASONS FOR THE TEACHERS' USES OF CODE-SWITCHING IN ADULT EFL CLASSROOMS*

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ABSTRACT

The current study investigated the acts of code-switching by teachers in EFL classrooms in the English Preparatory School of a private university in North Cyprus. With a sociolinguistic perspective, four different teachers' (two bilinguals, one native speaker of Turkish and one native speaker of English) classroom interactions were audio-recorded and analysed. Follow-up playback sessions were also conducted to tap into the teachers' perspectives on their own use of code-switching in the classroom. The results of the analysis revealed that all of the teachers code-switched for different purposes and they all believed that it was an effective tool to enhance learning when employed carefully.

Keywords: Code-switching, EFL teaching, L1 use in EFL, North Cyprus

YETİŞKİNLERE YÖNELİK İNGLİZCE SINIFLARINDA ÖĞRETMENLERİN DİL DEĞİŞİMİ KULLANIMLARININ SEBEPLERİ

ÖZET

Bu çalışma Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki özel bir üniversitenin İngilizce hazırlık okulunda ders veren öğretmenlerin dil değiştirme eylemleri incelemektedir. Sosyodilbilimsel bir bakış açısıyla gerçekleştirilen çalışmada dört (iki ikidilli, bir ana dili Türkçe, bir de ana dili İngilizce olan) İngilizce öğretmenin sınıf içerisindeki konuşmaları ve etkileşimleri ses kaydına alınarak incelenmiştir. Buna ek olarak öğretmenlerin kendi dil değiştirme eylemlerine yönelik bakış açılarını inceleyebilmek için takiben sınıf içi ses kayıtlarının dinletildiği birebir görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Yapılan analizlerin ışığında bütün katılımcı öğretmenlerin dil değiştirmeyi sınıf içerisinde farklı amaçlar için kullandıkları ve özenli kullanıldığı zaman dil değiştirmenin önemli bir öğrenim aracı olabileceğine inandıkları ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dil değiştirme, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretimi, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce sınıflarında ana dilin kullanılması, Kuzey Kıbrıs

INTRODUCTION

Code-switching is a broadly observed phenomenon especially in bilingual or multilingual communities, from single family units to large social groups. Code-switching alludes to the interchanging of two languages together while speaking (Bloomberg, 2004). Numan and Carter also define the term as “a phenomenon of switching from one language

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to another in the same discourse" (2001, p. 275). One of the first academics to express the idea that code-switching should be seen as a specific discourse strategy for bilinguals was Gumperz (1982). It has also come into use in language teaching classes, either within the teachers' or the students' discourses (Sert, 2005). Studies of language acquisition, second language acquisition, and language learning use the term code-switching to describe either bilingual/multilingual speakers' or language learners' cognitive linguistic abilities or to describe classroom or learner practices involving the use of more than one language (e.g. Romaine 1989; Cenoz & Genesee 2001; Fotos, 2001).

Many researchers (Lai, 1996; Cole, 1998; Critchley, 1999; Schweers, 1999; Burden, 2001; Tang, 2002; Greggio & Gil, 2007) have argued that code-switching can be an important element in contributing English language teaching and learning process. Some see code-switching as an opportunity for language development as it allows the effective transfer of information from the senders to the receivers (Skiba, 1997). Tien and Liu (2006) put forth that low proficiency students considered code-switching in their EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes as beneficial towards gaining better comprehension, especially when providing equivalent comprehension, as well as giving classroom procedures. In other words, it can be exploited as a teaching method for teaching second languages or it can ease language development as a means for providing language samples (Cook, 1989; 1991). Although, language development is seen to be minimal and slow, code-switching is still perceived as a positive indication of the learning progress.

In the light of these arguments, this article will suggest that code-switching should not be considered as a sign of defect when it is used by teachers within the classroom. It is argued by the authors that code-switching is a careful strategy employed by the teachers as well as the students while teaching/learning a second or foreign language. This present study aims to investigate where and for what purposes code-switching is being used by English language teachers at a language preparatory school of a private university in North Cyprus. In order to reach this aim the following research questions were set forth:

1. In what situations do English language teachers from different linguistic backgrounds code-switch?
2. For what purposes do English language teachers from different linguistic backgrounds code-switch?
3. What are the benefits and drawbacks of code-switching done by English language teachers in the language learning classroom?

Everywhere around the world where two or more groups with different languages and low language proficiencies in each other's language interact, code-switching begins providing a means for communication with one another, creating a third space where both languages can be mixed to make the meaning clear. By doing that, it can lead to changes in the use of both languages by its native speakers, hence contributing to language variations (McArthur, 1998). This makes it a variety of the linguistic manifestations of language contact and mixing which include borrowing on the lexical and syntactic levels, language transfer, linguistic convergence, interference, language attrition, language death, pidginization and creolization, among others. There is not much consensus in the literature, however, over which aspects should be included under the label 'code-switching' (Poplack, 2004).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, code-switching is seen as the path to convey both

social and linguistic meanings in terms of completing the relational and referential functions. Gumperz (1982) lists examples of situations created to convey meaning as:

to appeal to the literate, to appeal to the illiterate, to convey precise meaning, to ease communication, i.e., utilizing the shortest and the easiest route, to negotiate with greater authority to capture attention, i.e. stylistic, emphatic, emotional to emphasize a point, to communicate more effectively, to identify with a particular group, to close the status gap, to establish goodwill and support (p. 144).

In addition to Gumperz, Kow (2003) puts forth a few possible conditions for code-switching. Some of the conditions given are lack of one word in either language, some activities being only experienced in one of the languages, some concepts being easier to express in one of the languages, a misunderstanding to be clarified, one wishing to create a certain communication effect, one continuing to speak the language latest used in the conversation because of the trigger effect, one wanting to make a point, one wishing to express group solidarity, or one wishing to exclude another person from the dialogue. Kow (2003) also suggests that from this list, it may be possible to guess which situations provide a specific sociolinguistic context for code-switching. In other words, when a language learner lacks a word in English due to limited vocabulary, this person tends to code-switch by using the lexical component from his/her first language instead of English. Therefore, the function here is to overcome the language barrier to meaning making. Another example is a condition where the speaker, intending to express group solidarity, employs code-switching. Switching in this situation is done in order to establish goodwill and rapport. Likewise, a series of conditions may be established for this phenomenon switching depending on the social context.

In the classroom context, code-switching appears to be used both by students and teachers (Borlongan, 2009). On one hand, teachers seem to effectively employ code-switching in their EFL curriculum as a tool in various language learning activities (Kasperczyk, 2005). A code-switching activity in pairs, for example, assists students in elucidating misunderstandings using their target language. When a partner code-switches during their discussion, the other partner speaks in their native language exemplifying the notion. In this type of an exercise, students are engaged in practicing and explaining concepts to each other (Kasperczyk, 2005). On the other hand, code-switching may also be used by teachers during teaching to introduce the meaning of concept words when introducing a new unit (Kasperczyk, 2005). In this context, a student has to work on listening and comprehension in his/her target language. These are examples of code-switching being consciously employed as a teaching strategy. However, teachers' use of code-switching is generally performed subconsciously (Mattson & Burenhult, 1999). Therefore, teachers might not always be aware of the functions and outcomes of the code-switching process (Sert, 2005). This behaviour seems to be automatic during their in-class speech and according to Qind (2010), it is inevitable. Nevertheless, either conscious or subconscious, inevitable or not, code-switching necessarily serves some basic functions that may be beneficial in language learning environments (Qing, 2010). These language classroom functions are catalogued as (a) topic switch, (b) affective functions, and (c) repetitive functions by Mattsson and

Burenhult-Mattsson (1999). This categorisation will be used as a conceptual framework in this study. The sections below provide an overview of these functions.

Topic Switch

Cole (1998) puts forth that teachers are able to exploit students' previous first language (L1) learning experience to increase their understanding of the new language. Topic switch can be seen in cases where the teacher alters his/her language according to the topic that is under discussion. In situations where grammar is instructed, the teacher shifts his/her language to the mother tongue of his/her students in dealing with particular grammar points that are being taught at that moment. In these cases, the students concentrate on the new knowledge by making use of code-switching and accordingly making use of their native tongue. Therefore, it may be suggested that a link from known (native language) to unknown (new foreign language content) is built to transfer the new content and meaning which enables clarity.

Affective Functions

Another situation where teachers seem to code-switch is to carry out affective functions. In such situations, teachers use code-switching to express their emotions. In this respect, code-switching is used in order to build solidarity and good rapport with the students. This type of switch contributes to the ability of the teachers to create a supportive language environment in language learning classrooms. However, it may not always be seen as a conscious process regarding the teachers. Yet, as Sert (2005) also argues, one may also argue that the natural occurrence of code-switching is also unconscious as one may not guarantee its conscious application.

Repetitive Function

In repetitive function, teacher uses code-switching to transfer the necessary knowledge to the students in order to convey clarity. In order to clarify the meaning of the instructions, for example, the teacher code-switches from the target language to the native language. In this manner, she/he stresses the importance of the foreign language content for efficient comprehension. However, the tendency of repeating the instruction in the native language may lead to some undesired student behaviours. In other words, when students get used to instructions being translated into their native language, they may lose interest in listening to the former instruction, which will have negative academic consequences as the students will have limited exposure to the foreign language discourse (Sert, 2005).

Pros and Cons of Using Code-switching in Language Teaching

Language teachers who are in favour of applying the innovative techniques and methods in the language teaching environment generally tend to refrain from using any form of the native language during classroom instruction. On the other hand, supporters of the native language use in the form of code-switching argue that it might be an effective strategy in various aspects. Taking into consideration the views and opinions of these two factions, some weak and strong sides of the code-switching use in foreign language classroom settings need to be critically reviewed.

According to Cook (2002), who carried out a research on the application of code-switching in multilingual classrooms, the use of code-switching may cause problems because students do not share the same native language. When code-switching is applied by teachers whilst instructing, students should share the same native language. Otherwise,

those students who speak a different native language cannot follow the course, may feel left out and cannot benefit from the use of code-switching as an instructional strategy. Another point that should be taken into consideration is the competence of the teacher in the mother tongue of the students that also plays a vital role when positive contributions of code-switching are expected. In addition to this, Eldridge (1996) suggests that learners cannot be sure if their addressees will share knowledge of their mother tongue in the real world outside the classroom. Therefore, the interaction of students with native speakers of the target language may not be achieved if the learner switches his/her language during communication.

Skiba's (1997) findings concerning code-switching in language classrooms show that in circumstances where code-switching is applied due to an inability of expression, it enables continuity in speech rather than presenting interference in language. In this respect, it could be said that code-switching is a supporting element in terms of communicating for information and social interaction purposes, as it is used as a tool for transference of meaning. Moreover, the functions of the teacher's code-switching stand as supportive explanations in favour of the phenomenon. Sert (2005) adds that code-switching allows the teacher to build a bridge from known to unknown and thus is an important element in language teaching when used effectively.

In the context of the current study, i.e. an English language preparatory school in North Cyprus, the general policy is for teachers to use the target language, i.e. English, while teaching in the classroom to maximise students' contact with the target language. While this is a valid argument considering the context, i.e. English being taught in a predominantly Turkish speaking country, teachers seem to use code-switching unofficially in their classroom teaching every day. Thus, the current study focused on the reasons for the teachers' use of code-switching within this specific EFL context. We argue that code-switching can carefully be employed by the teachers while teaching a second or foreign language without it preventing students from mastering the target language. Thus, the study investigates where and for what purposes code-switching is being used by EFL teachers and their ideas about their linguistic practices.

METHOD

Research Design

This case study was used to investigate and reveal the usage of code-switching by teachers within EFL classrooms at a university's English language preparatory classes where students from Turkish Cypriot and Turkish backgrounds were learning English.

Participants

Four teachers of English accepted to take part in this research. Two of these teachers were bilinguals of English and Cypriot Turkish (Cypriot Turkish is a local variety of Turkish language with differences in lexicon, syntax and phonology. It is widely spoken in North Cyprus), one was a native speaker of English who understood Turkish and the fourth one was a native speaker of Cypriot Turkish. One of the bilingual teachers, Ahmet, had been teaching for seven years. The class that Ahmet (All names used in this article are pseudonyms) was teaching at the time of the study consisted of architecture students who were of mixed levels. The other bilingual teacher, Selma, had also been teaching for

seven years. She was teaching a group of engineering students. These students were of mixed levels in English as well. The Turkish Cypriot teacher, Halil had been teaching for 42 years. The class he was teaching were from Maritime studies and were of mixed levels in terms of their English language proficiency. Finally, the native speaker of English, Susan, had been teaching English for 16 years. She was teaching pre-intermediate level students in the psychology department at the time of the study. The syllabus that the teachers were following was supplied by the university and it was based on grammar.

After the procedures of the study were explained to each participant and their written consent was obtained, each participant was observed in their language classrooms for approximately two hours while teaching and approximately three A4 pages of notes were taken for each teacher in relation to their use of code-switching. During these two hours, their natural language use and interactions with students were also recorded by the use of a digital voice-recorder. This specific design was used in order to capture teachers' code-switching and later to discuss with them their linguistic practices. The recordings of classroom interactions added up to 8 hours of spoken data, parts of which were later transcribed by the researcher for further analysis.

Following these observations and recordings, teachers were interviewed individually regarding the use of code-switching in their classrooms in order to reveal their purposes of using this strategy as well as whether they were using it as a conscious strategy or not. These interviews, also known as play-back sessions (Harris, 2006), were used to tap into the participants' understandings of code-switching as a language teaching strategy. The interviews took 30-40 minutes each, which added up approximately to 140 minutes of voice recordings. The interviews were finally transcribed and the main themes were coded to answer the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Code-switching Acts within the EFL classroom

Analysis of the in-class observations has revealed that all participants, including Susan who was a native speaker of English, code-switched during teaching. The number of times and the function each code-switching act served, i.e. topic switch, affective function, and repetitive function (Mattsson & Burenhult-Mattsson, 1999), is listed in Table 1.

Table 1. *Frequency and Function of Code-switching Acts*

| Participant | Frequency of code-switching | Purpose | | |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| | | Topic Switch | Affective Functions | Repetitive Functions |
| Halil: Native speaker of Cypriot Turkish | 40 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Ahmet: Bilingual | 30 | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Selma: Bilingual | 35 | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Susan: Native speaker of English | 15 | | ✓ | ✓ |

As can be seen in Table 1, the teacher who code-switched the most during his two hours of teaching was Halil (40 times). In addition, he used all of the three functions mentioned by Mattsson and Burenhult-Mattsson (1999). As Cook (1989; 1991) argues code-switching consciously employed by this teacher seems to be a teaching strategy rather than a reflex to fill in the gaps in communication. The following examples illustrate his code-switching practices:

| Original Utterance | Translation |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Can you do the washing.... what else...</i> başka ne yaparsın | <i>Can you do the washing.... what else...</i> what else do you do |

In this extract, Halil was asking students what they could do on their own before teaching the topic ‘have something done’. He repeated his question in Turkish for his students to understand but also added “do you do” to his initial utterance in English to mark a topic switch. The function of his switch here was to move from one topic, i.e. students being able to do washing, to another daily activity that they are able to do. Hence, it illustrates his use of code-switching to change the topic.

In the following two extracts, Halil was brainstorming with his students before beginning a new grammar point. He repeated his exact words in Turkish to clarify the meaning for the students. However, while doing that, he did not change the syntactic structure of the sentence in English. He only inserted his repetitive utterance in Turkish within his original sentence to repeat the utterance in the students’ L1:

| Original Utterance | Translation |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>You are the only one... bir tek sensin</i> <i>wearing a uniform</i> | <i>You are the only one... you are the only one</i> <i>wearing a uniform</i> |
| <i>I have saçımı kestiririm... I have my hair cut</i> | <i>I have I have my hair cut ... I have my hair cut</i> |

The last example of code-switching that Halil used was employed in order to illustrate a request by the teacher. The student was late to class and therefore interrupted the lesson. Halil did not accept him to the class and as the student was leaving, he said:

| Original Utterance | Translation |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Kapıyı kapat...behind you</i> | Close the door ...behind you |

In this utterance, the affective function was brought into play to inform the student about the classroom rules which he disobeyed and to show the teacher’s emotions in this context. In the audio recording, the anger and disapproval could be identified from the falling intonation of the teacher’s code-switching at the end of his sentence.

Interestingly, Ahmet and Selma, both bilinguals, code-switched approximately the same number of times (30 and 35 times respectively). Both also used exactly the same functions while using code-switching in their classrooms. Contrary to Halil’s case, these

teachers seemed to subconsciously code-switch. Sert (2005) suggested that “in some cases code-switching may be regarded as an automatic and unconscious behavior” (p. 4). The following are some examples of Ahmet’s code-switching in the classroom:

| Original Utterance | Translation |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>have</i> nasıl yapacayık | how do we do <i>have</i> |
| <i>This is past participle</i> olduğu için | <i>This is past participle</i> because it is [past participle] |
| <i>Which one....</i> soru değil o | <i>Which one....</i> that is not a question |

In the first example, Ahmet was teaching past simple and present perfect tenses. In order to elicit the past participle form of the word *have*, the teacher code-switched and asked the question in Cypriot Turkish (he used specific syntactic features of Cypriot Turkish dialect in his utterance). Thereby the topic switch function is used to elicit prior learning. In the second example, Ahmet was answering a question asked by a student about why past participle was used in an exercise written on the board. He used the repetitive function to emphasise the reason for using the tense and did so by combining the two sentences that he formed in two different linguistic codes. Finally, in the third example, Ahmet was clarifying a students’ misunderstanding by using the topic switch function of code-switching.

Similar to Ahmet, the other bilingual teacher, Selma, code-switched 35 times in two hours of teaching. Interestingly, she also did not use code-switching for any affective function but consistently used it for topic switch and repetition. Below are examples to illustrate her code-switching practices:

| Original Utterance | Translation |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Saçımı boyattıyordun <i>when I saw her</i> | She was having her hair dyed <i>when I saw her</i> |
| <i>No, it is past simple</i> niçin <i>past simple</i> yapmadın orda | <i>No, it is past simple</i> why didn't <i>you make it past simple there</i> |
| <i>Which tense? ...</i> hangi zaman? | <i>Which tense? ...</i> Which tense? |

In the first example, Selma was teaching *have something done*. In order to explain to her students that “having their hair dyed” is done by someone else, she code-switched. Selma made use of her bilingualism to clarify the meaning of this grammar point for her students, thus she was using topic switch. In the second example, students were answering exercises written on the board. While asking a student the reason for her answer to a specific exercise, Selma code-switched. The last example illustrates the repetitive function used by this bilingual teacher. Here, Selma was asking the students to identify the tense for the example written on the white board.

The above examples illustrate that bilingual teachers use the topic switch and repetitive functions in their language learning classrooms to clarify meaning of grammar points

for their students. It seems from the data presented here that in this specific context, these functions work as bridges between students' knowledge of their everyday language and the new information presented by their teachers.

Among the participants, Susan, the only native speaker of English, seemed to code-switch the least times (15 times). Having very low proficiency in Turkish could be the reason for this. Nevertheless, the fact that she was using code-switching in her classrooms shows that this practice is sometimes a necessity in EFL classrooms. During the two hours of observation, she seemed to use repetitive and affective functions rather than the topic switch function. The teacher used these functions to clarify understanding and instruction as well as to create a supportive classroom atmosphere for the students. The following examples illustrate her code-switchings:

| Original Utterance | Translation |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>She is doing it.. kendi yapıyor you do not do it...kendi yapmıyorsunuz</i> | <i>She is doing it.. doing it herself you do not do it... you do not do it</i> |
| <i>What...sen yaptın?</i> | <i>What...did you do it?</i> |
| <i>All you have to do is put them in the right order...düzeltmek lazım</i> | <i>All you have to do is put them in the right order...need to correct</i> |
| <i>It is hot in here, there's no klima</i> | <i>It is hot in here, there's no air-conditioning</i> |

In Susan's first example, she was teaching 'have something done'. She code-switched two times but she used two different functions in each of these switchings. In the first one, she was trying to explain the function of the grammar point in question by switching to the mother tongue of the student in order to clarify understanding. Hence she was using topic switch. In the second part of the sentence, she used the repetitive function to show students the meaning of the grammar point in Turkish. In the second example, Susan was trying to get feedback from a student by asking if he did the exercises or had them done. Presumably, Susan supposed that the student knows the meaning of the word "What." So, she kept that word but switched to Turkish for the rest of her question to make sure that she gets an honest answer from her student. Here she was using the affective function because her aim was not to clarify the meaning of a grammar point. In the third example, Susan code-switches to clarify the instruction she has just given to the students to make sure that they do the exercises correctly. Thus, she is using the repetitive function. The final example, which again illustrates the affective function of code-switching, was a comment made by Susan about the general condition of the classroom and had nothing to do with the teaching of English. Interestingly, Susan commented in the interviews that she uses such code-switching when the Turkish word is shorter than the English equivalent. According to her, it is more convenient to say "klima" than "air-conditioning."

Teachers' Perspectives on Code-switching in EFL classrooms

In addition to in-class audio recordings, teachers were asked to comment about their own code-switching in the classroom by playing parts of the recordings back to them (Harris, 2006). In these interview sessions, they were asked to comment on code-switching as a teaching strategy based on their own use of it.

All of the participants claimed that code-switching is a useful strategy in teaching English in their context as it utilizes the shortest and easiest route to teach a topic (Gumperz 1982), especially in grammatical points:

Ahmet: Instead of using five words to express ourselves while teaching we can simplify this by switching to the students' mother-tongue ... Especially with low level students, because of syllabus requirements only English is impossible as it is time consuming
Halil: The use of only English does not help students in clarifying the rules of grammar. Students will get a low mark if they do not understand what is being taught, therefore in order to improve students grades code-switching is a must. When preparing students for the real world, only English is better but in terms of our aim and syllabus requirements code-switching enhances learning.

This was a point also raised by Qing (2010) as teachers in her study code-switched to translate or elaborate the important message during the process of explaining new vocabulary or grammar points" (p. 112). As Halil and Ahmet also emphasised, code-switching in the classroom helps the teachers to clarify meaning of grammar points and also saves them invaluable time in keeping up with the time constraints of the syllabus they are following. As Susan suggested, by "not repeating over and over again" the English words, they are saving time. Furthermore, the use of code-switching enables the teacher to convey precise meaning which helps enhance learning (Gumperz, 1982). Possibilities of misunderstanding are minimised as their native language is also used while teaching the grammar points. As Kow (2003) suggests, the function used by bilinguals in this type of context is to overcome the language barrier to meaning making. Selma, a bilingual teacher, claimed that "using code-switching is easier for students to understand the topics." As Tien and Liu (2006) put forth, code-switching is beneficial towards gaining better comprehension, especially when providing equivalent comprehension, as well as giving classroom procedures. In order to transfer the new content and meaning code-switching is used as a bridge to transfer precise meaning and understanding and therefore enhance clarity. If students were learning English to use it in their everyday interactions, then it is argued that code-switching may affect their fluency, vocabulary and competence negatively (Eldridge, 1996). As Halil pointed out in the above quote, the main aim of the students attending the English Preparatory School in this specific university is to pass the proficiency exam at the end of the semester and register to their departments. Thus, their motivation is extrinsic and instrumental rather than intrinsic and/or integrative (Crooks & Schmidt 1991; Lumsden, 1994). According to Halil, in such cases where students do not aim to learn and use the language for communicative purposes, code-switching is a good tool to enhance learning and better student results in examinations.

Another theme that emerged from the individual interviews with teachers is that code-switching helps to deal with a number of affective issues in the classroom. The first one of these issues is motivation. According to Susan, "it encourages them when they are trying to understand. So they participate, it motivates them." It works as a cycle where students who understand a topic participate more and thus they can achieve better results. Once they get good results, their motivation is boosted. Second, as Gumperz (1982) has also

argued, teachers in the study claimed that code-switching closes the status gap between the teacher and the students. According to Selma code-switching to the students' mother tongue during instruction "softens the atmosphere as there are not equivalent words in English that have the same meaning both literally and culturally." In this way, the teacher gives the message that he/she can understand the students' language and is therefore culturally closer to them compared to a foreigner who cannot speak their language. Therefore it helps to establish good will and support in the classroom. Susan put forth that when used for this purpose, code-switching "boosts students' self confidence." Students feel closer to their teachers and feel that they are supported. They become more willing to break the boundaries of confidence that limits them from learning the new language as they know that if they cannot produce correct utterances in English and they use Turkish, their teacher will understand them.

Despite talking about so many benefits that code-switching brought to classroom practice, participants also pointed out some drawbacks. According to Ahmet, code-switching "should not be used with high level students." While code-switching was described as "a must with low level students" for a number of purposes such as building up confidence or clarifying meaning, according to the participants, these purposes are not valid for high level students. For this reason, code-switching should not be used with high level students due to the fact that they have better competence in the target language. In other words, high level students are able to understand the simple use of English as the target language. Thus, they do not need to refer back to Turkish to clarify meaning or understand instructions.

According to Cole (1998) teachers are able to exploit students' previous first language learning experience to increase their understanding of the new language. Therefore, code-switching should only be used when presenting topics and clarifying instructions using students' existing knowledge of their mother tongue. All the teachers in the study argued that code-switching should only be done while presenting grammar points. The aim when teaching grammar is to make sure students understand the rules before applying them in communication. As Halil explained "once students have understood the rules then they are able to apply them." In the application process, where students are practicing their language skills, code-switching is unnecessary as teachers are getting feedback from their students about their learning:

Selma: When we were learning English, we did not learn any grammar rules, we learnt through listening and speaking. Therefore, when acquiring the language skills, code-switching should not be done.

The only place where students are able to use and absorb the target language is the classroom. So, according to Selma, a bilingual teacher, the more they use and hear it, the better. Susan added that "switching back and forth will not help students in the future when speaking and listening to native speakers." Students in this situation will not be able to use their mother tongue and this will lead to a lack in communication. These conditions support Eldridge's argument (1996) who suggested that learners cannot be sure if their addressees will share knowledge of their mother tongue in the real world outside the classroom. Yet, another drawback experienced by Susan was that "when students get used to the usage of

code-switching, they expect it all the time. They expect their teacher to use their mother tongues even in speaking activities.” This supports Sert’s (2005) arguments, who claims that students get used to instructions being translated into their native language which results in negative academic consequences as the students will have limited exposure to the foreign language discourse. In other words, students in the language learning classroom expect the teacher to code-switch in every situation and for everything being taught. This may result in students becoming dependent on teacher’s code-switching for explanations and therefore may prevent them from becoming autonomous learners.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was designed as a case study to find out how and for what purposes teachers use code-switching in their EFL classrooms in a private university in North Cyprus. The results of the analysis suggest that regardless of the teachers’ linguistic backgrounds, all of the participants in the study code-switch in their classrooms despite the general principles of the English Preparatory School banning this act. Although the recent literature on English language teaching discourages the use of L1 in language classrooms (Atkinson, 1993), it appears that teachers do in fact make use of code-switching in language learning classrooms for purposes such as clarifying meaning, saving time in their teaching and motivating students. When teachers encourage negotiation between languages by reinforcing the practice of code-switching, students’ understanding, which leads to participation and motivation, is enhanced. The participants also strongly believed that it is for the benefit of the students in this specific context where the aim of the students was to pass a specific language proficiency exam focusing on grammatical points within a limited period of time. In this regard, they all agreed that code-switching may not be useful if the students are integratively motivated as code-switching may prevent them from developing communicative competence.

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