Ocak 2015 Cilt:23 No:1 Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi 241-252

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE USE OF L1: INSIGHTS FROM AN EFL CLASSROOM

Metin TİMUÇİN
Sakarya Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksek Okulu, Sakarya, Türkiye

İlknur BAYTAR
Kastamonu Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Bölümü, Kastamonu, Türkiye

İlk Kayıt Tarihi: 29.01.2014 ***Yayına Kabul Tarihi: 20.02.2014***

Abstract

The use of mother tongue (L1) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context is a controversial issue and there has been no absolute research outcome that indicates whether it should be avoided at all costs or not, but it is an incontrovertible fact that while some of the teachers avoid using mother tongue in language teaching classroom as they thought that using L1 hinders the target language (L2) acquisition, the others favor it for variety of reasons. The aim of this study is to identify the functions of L1 use in an EFL setting. Four English teachers and 20 students studying at a state university in Turkey were involved in the study. The data consists of 129 instances of code-switching which were recorded during the actual teaching hours. The findings of this small-scale investigation of code-switching suggest that the use of L1 generally denotes pedagogical purposes.

Keywords: *Code switching, foreign language teaching, L1 use*

İNGİLİZCE YABANCI DİL SINIFLARINDA ANA DİL KULLANIMININ İŞLEVLERİ: BİR YABANCI DİL SINIFINDAN YANSIMALAR

Özet

İngilizce sınıflarında ana dil kullanımı tartışmalı bir konudur ve kullanılıp, kullanılmaması hususunda kesin bir araştırma sonucu bulunmamaktadır,fakat şu da yadsınamaz bir gerçektir ki bazı öğretmenler ana dili kullanmaktan kaçınırken, bazıları da çeşitli sebeplerden ötürü ana dil kullanımına sıcak bakmaktadırlar. Bu çalışmanın amacı, ingilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretildiği ortamlarda, ana dil kullanımının işlevlerini ortaya koymaktır. Bu çalışmaya, Türkiye'de bir devlet üniversitesinde çalışan 4 İngilizce öğretmeni ve burda eğitim gören 20 öğrenci katılmıştır. Veri ders saatlerinde kaydedilmiş olup, dil değiştirmeye dair 129 örnek içermektedir. Bu küçük ölçekli dil değiştirme araştırmasının sonucu, ana dil kullanımının genellikle pedagojik amaçlara işaret ettiğini gösterir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Dil değiştirme, yabancı dil öğretimi, anadil kullanımı*

1. Introduction

While explaining sociocultural theory, Lantolf and Thorne (2007, p. 197) note that "human neurobiology is a necessary condition for higher order thinking" and cognitive activity of people develops by the help of interaction in social settings such as "family life, peer group interaction, and in institutional contexts like schooling, organized sport activities and work places". Moreover, Kao (2010) reveals that sociocultural theory regards second language acquisition as a form of social practice and that it also emphasizes the need of examining language learning process from a social perspective. One of the most important components of sociocultural theory, on the other hand, is "scaffolding". Shumm (2006) defines scaffolding as a kind of support for learners while learning a language and it diminishes day by day, as the learners progress. For the purpose of providing students with necessary stepping-stones, Anton and Dicamilla (1999) point out the relevance of using L1 in the process of scaffolding. Therefore, it is well worth dwelling on the relationship between using L1 and scaffolding in language teaching classroom since Meyer also (2008) asserts that the use of L1 in the language classroom reduces affective filter. Moreover, the use of L1 is effective for the language learning process as it plays the role of a "critical psychological tool" that provides the learner with the formation of beneficial cooperative dialogue in order to complete the language tasks (Anton and Dicamilla, 1999, p. 245) More importantly, thinking and language are stuck with each other and language is the most important semiotic system which provides the mediation of our thought among the learners so prohibition of the use of L1 takes away two important elements for learning process which are L1 and effectual cooperation (Anton and Dicamilla, 1999). This paper focuses on the code-switching phenomenon and also tries to find out the extent to which code-switching is a purposeful activity in an EFL context.

1.1. Code Switching and Its Functions

Code-switching (CS) in foreign language context has attracted the researchers' interest in the recent years, and now it would be suffice to say that it is no longer considered to be a "random phenomenon" (Eldridge, 1996). The term code switching is defined as;

> …the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems. Most frequently the alternation takes the form of two subsequent sentences, as when a speaker uses a second language either to reiterate his message or to reply to someone else's statement (Gumperz, 1982, p. 59).

According to Jingxia's (2010) definition, code switching is the act of shifting from one language to another during the conversation. In the same way, Jamshidi and Na-

vehebrahim (2013, p. 186) define the term as "the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent". In addition, Lee (2010) explains code-switching as the use of two or more languages in the same conversation. Riegelhaupt (2000) states that code-switching comes into being when a speaker uses one language systematically while the other speaker continues using another language.

1.2. Types of Code Switching

Taking advantage of Sankoff and Poplack's (1981) taxonomy, we can speak of three types of code switching and these are; tag-switching, inter-sentential switching and intra-sentential switching. Rezvani (2011) indicates that tag-switching comes into being when a tag or short fixed phrase is inserted in one language into an utterance that is in the other language, whereas inter-sentential code switching occurs at a sentence level in which each clause is either in one language or the other, and lastly intra-sentential code switching is found within the clause or sentence boundary. Moreover, Gumperz (1982) presents two types of switching which are situational and metaphorical. Jingxia (2010, p. 11) explains that "situational switching involves a change in participants and/or strategies while metaphorical switching involves only a change in topical emphasis". For the purpose of the present study, alongside being aware of the types of code-switching, it is equally important to be conscious of the functions of code-switching.

1.3. Functions of Code Switching

According to Sert (2005), teachers generally do not perform code switching consciously; in other words, they are not aware of the functions of code switching but it should be acknowledged that code switching has some functions that play an important role in foreign language learning. Guthrie (1984, p. 45) suggests five functions of code switching; "(1) for translation, (2) as a we - code, (3) for procedures and directions, (4) for clarification and (5) to check for understanding". Duff and Polio (1990) believe that teachers switch to L1 for the functions that change from explaining grammar to managing the class. Besides, Şenel (2010) reveals that teachers use L1 in order to clarify the meaning, to check whether the text is understood or not, to give the meanings of new words and to help narrowing the gap of culture through translation. In addition to that, Greggio and Gil's (2007, p. 375) study shows that "teacher made use of code switching especially in four moments: a) when explaining grammar; b) giving instructions; c) monitoring/assisting the students; and d) when correcting activities". Similarly, Moghadam et al. (2012) suggest that teachers use code switching to check understanding, to clarify and to socialize.

2. Literature Review

As is noted by Sampson, "the origins of 'English-only" classroom policies, which encourage learners to use L2 as the sole means of interaction with teachers and peers,

appear to date back widespread discrediting of the Grammar-Translation method" (2011, p. 293), a fact, perhaps, mainly due to native-speaker teachers' limited command of learners' L1. And, the outcome was naturally mass-production of 'English-only' course books to be used in various international contexts (Sampson, 2011, p. 293). With the inclusion and intervention of non-native speakers of English teachers in international learning/teaching contexts, those teachers' use of L1 - for alleviating the acquisition of L2 - has turned out to be a noticeable fact. As a result, in order to display the aspects of the use of L1 in EFL setting, a number of classroom code switching studies were carried out throughout the years.

A review of relevant literature is likely to reveal a valuable insight regarding use and functions of L1 use in the foreign language teaching context. The study conducted by Qian et al. (2009) on code-switching between Chinese and English in a Chinese primary school shows that teachers tend to use tag- switching, intra-sentential switching and inter-sentential switching but inter- sentential switching is the one that has a higher frequency and this is attributed to the teacher's aim of giving clear instruction and getting more responses from students. Likewise, a study conducted by Igbal (2011) indicates that out of 2646, 983 examples show intra-sentential code switching and this explains the significant difference between two types of code switching. Another study which was carried out in a Turkish context by Moran (2009), on teacher's code switching and its functions, reveals that teachers code switched to Turkish mostly for curriculum access, classroom management and for interpersonal reasons.

Grim's (2010, p. 207) research findings indicate that teachers switched to L1 for the purpose of "facilitating comprehension, overcoming grammatical obstacles and saving time in lengthy L2 task explanations". In a Pakistani context, Gulzar's (2010) research that focuses on the utility of code switching indicates that the most important reason for code switching is clarification while the least important one is linguistic competence. Jinexia's (2008, p. 59) study, on the other hand, posits that "the amount of L1 varies in different lesson contents, that is, least in theme-based activities, then in text analysis and most in discussion of tests and other assignments". Jingxia's study results show "teachers' performance of code switching is mainly from the three elements of adaptation to the linguistic reality, teachers' and students' language proficiency, and communicative needs in the process of achieving their communicative goals" (2009, p. 49). Regarding the teachers` and students` stances towards in EFL classes, Yao (2011) suggests that both teachers and students have positive attitudes towards teachers' code switching in EFL classroom. Yao`s (2011) positive statement of the use of code switching is reinforced by similar studies in different teaching contexts (see Kayaoğlu, 2012; Ahmad, 2009). As for pedagogical value of code-switching, Üstünel and Seedhouse (2005) indicate that code switching in foreign language classrooms is related to the evolution of pedagogical focus and sequence so through their language choice, learners can show their alignment or misalignment with their teacher's pedagogical focus. Rezvani and Rasekh (2011) also focuse on the value of

the phenomenon from the Iranian teaching/learning perspective and assert that Iranian English foreign language teachers in Iranian Elementary EFL classrooms used code switching frequently and they code switched for a number of pedagogic and social functions that contribute to a better teacher- student interaction.

3. Methodology

In this study, qualitative research method was used and the data involve 129 instances of CS. According to Mackey and Gass (2005), qualitative research can be defined as a research method that relies on descriptive data and it does not use statistics. As regards the characteristics of qualitative research, it can be concluded that, qualitative researchers deal with showing a more natural scene of the event being handled and they work with fewer participants as it is in this study instead of large groups of participants (Mackey and Gass, 2005). Considering the scale and nature of the current research paper, this particular method seemed to be more appropriate.

3.1. Research Questions

By focusing on the code-switching in a Turkish EFL teaching/learning context, the present study primarily engages in addressing the following questions;

1. Are there any instances of use of L1 in the foreign language classroom in question?

2. What sort of pattern seems to be prevailing in the teachers' utterances when they resort to use of L1?

3.2. Participants

The study includes 20 students, graduated from high school, and their ages range from 18 to 21. Being first year students and coming from various departments such as economics and business management, these students take English Language Preparatory Program which lasts for a year. Despite the fact that they have studied English for years, their level is low as they have had no proper English instruction before. Moreover, 4 non-native English teachers in total who are teaching these students were involved in this study. Their work experience ranges from 2 to 3 years and like the students, these teachers were also selected randomly.

3.3. Setting

The study takes place at a Turkish state university's English Preparatory Program and the aim of this program is to help students to improve their basic English skills as they have very limited knowledge of English. The data was gathered in one of the prep classes at this state university during the spring semester of 2012- 2013 academic year.

3.4. Data Collection Instrument and Procedures

The data of this study was gathered through the help of audio recordings of four English instructors in the research setting, and the instances of actual teaching/learning interaction was audio-recorded during the teaching hours. Then the audio recording was transcribed and analyzed in order to identify precisely the instances of code switching and the functions of these noted switches.

4. Results and Analysis of the Classroom Recordings

The teachers' code-switching in EFL classroom was analyzed in terms of their functions and according to the results it can be concluded that teachers' use of CS shows different functions and the analysis of the classroom recording indicates various and many CS examples, and the functions can be classified as following;

1. Translation
2. To check understanding
3. For procedures and directions
4. Explaining grammar
5. Managing class
6. Other reasons

Table 1. Frequency of the Functions of CS to Turkish

Functions	Times of occurrence	Percentage
Translation	36	27, 90 %
To check understanding	26	20, 15 %
For procedures and directions	23	17, 82 %
Explaining grammar	21	16, 27 %
Managing class	15	11, 62 %
Other reasons	08	6, 20 %
Total	129	100 %

Table 1 is given to show the frequencies and percentages of the functions of CS to Turkish. It shows 129 CS instances in total. Among the functions of CS, "translation" indicates 27, 90 % of the total with its 36 instances. Secondly, the function of "to check understanding" represents 20, 15 % of the total with its 26 instances. With its 23 instances, the function of "for procedures and directions" shows 17, 82 % of the total. Fourthly, compared to other functions "explaining grammar" represents 16, 27 % of the total with its 21 instances, and with its 15 instances, the function of "managing

class" indicates 11, 62 % of the total, and lastly, "other reasons" represents 6, 20 % of the total with its 8 instances.

4.1. Functions of Teachers' CS

In this part, teachers' CS and their functions are discussed with the help of analyzing the sample extracts that were taken from the classroom recording. Transcription key and symbols of meaning are given in Appendix 1.

4.1.1. CS for Translation

Extract 1: CS for Translation

73	S6:	My father isn't very fit, he doesn't do enough exercise.
74	T:	Yes, enough exercise, do you agree?
75	S6:	Yes.
76	T: →	Yes, he is right. He doesn't do enough exercise. *Yeterince egzersiz yapmiyor*. [Tr.] He doesn't do enough exercise. Yes, yes, Yu?
77	Yu:	I can't go there on foot, it is too far.
78	T: →	It is too far, yes good it is too far which means that I can't go there on foot, it is too far, it isn't close enough. *Bu ikisi aynı anlama geliyor değil mi? It isn't close enough, yeterince yakın değil*, [Tr.] it is too far. 3 yes.

In this extract, teacher gives explanation about the use of "enough" and it is seen that, the teacher translates "He doesn't do enough exercise." into Turkish by saying "*Yeterince egzersiz yapmiyor*." in order to help students understand the issue better. As it has been mentioned before, translation represents 27, 90 % of the total with its 36 instances and the findings show among the other functions of code switching, translation is the most frequently used one.

It can be claimed that the findings are consistent with previous research findings of Gulzar (2010) which state that one of the reasons of teacher's CS is for the aim of translation, and that "teachers often switch their code to translate or elaborate the important message during the process of explaining new vocabulary, grammar points or instructions instead of continuing in the foreign language" (Gulzar, 2010; p. 31).

4.1.2. CS for to Check Understanding

Extract 2: CS for to check understanding

146	S8:	*Anlamıyorum*. [Tr.]
147	T: →	You don't understand readings (+++) *Anlıyor muyuz parçaları*? [Tr.] (++++++)
148	SS:	*Anlıycaz*. [Tr.]

149	T:	Yes who changed the clock on here the clock on computer. Did you change it? (+++)

In this extract, S8 expresses his ideas about the passage that they read by saying "*Anlamıyorum*." and then that the teacher says; "You don't understand readings." After waiting a few seconds and seeing that there is no answer, the teacher switches to L1 to check students' understanding by asking; "*Anlıyor muyuz parcalari*?" and students answer by saying; "*Anlıycaz*." when teacher asks it in mother tongue and it is seen that the teacher uses L1 in order to check students' comprehension. CS with the aim 'to check understanding' represents 20,15 % in total with its 26 instances and as it is understood, it is the second frequently used item by the teacher compared to other functions.

4.1.3. CS for Procedures and Directions

Another function of CS is "… for procedures and directions" (Guthrie, 1984, p. 45). Similarly, Grim (2010, p. 199) also states "teachers would switch to English to either give instructions to carry out the tasks or to translate the instructions they had just given in the L2".

Extract 3: CS for Procedures and Directions

01	T: →	Let's try to understand A. B. *Tabloya bir göz atalım* [Tr.] (++) "too much, too many, enough, a little, a few". *Az önce de zaten bunlardan bahsettik biraz hemen tekrar bahsedelim birlikte bakıyoruz*. [Tr.] [inaudible] . I am stressed, I have too much work, I have too much work. *İlk cümleye bakıyoruz*. [Tr.] (+++++) Here we have "too much" we use this one "much" for countable or uncountable? Which one?
02	SS:	Uncountable.
03	T: →	My diet is unhealty, I eat too many cakes and sweets, I eat too many cakes and sweets (++++) so we use this one to talk about countable things ok? *Buna dikkat edin*. [Tr.] I am too tired (++++++) I am too tired. *Yorgunum ama dışarı çıkabilirim demek mi bu yoksa dışarı çıkamayacak kadar yorgunum mu* ? [Tr.]

In this extract, teacher is dealing with the subject of "too much, too many, enough, a little and a few", and it is seen from the extract above teacher switches from English to Turkish to give some instructions and to direct the students by saying; "*Tabloya bir göz atalım.", "İlk cümleye bakiyoruz.", "Buna dikkat edin.*", etc. CS for the purpose of giving directions and instructions represents 17, 82 of the total with its 23 instances and it can be concluded that CS for procedures and directions is the third frequently used one compared to other functions.

4.1.4. CS for Explaining Grammar

Extract 4: CS for Explaining Grammar

49	S5:	[I don't drink enough water.
50	T:	Enough?
51	SS:	*Evet*, enough water. [Tr.]
52	T: →	Yes, I don't drink enough water, *burda isim olduğu için "enough water"*. [Tr.] Yes, I don't drink enough water and 4, Su?

In this extract, teacher is dealing with different grammatical concepts such as; "enough, a little, a few, etc." The teacher is trying to differentiate between the usage of "enough" with a noun and with an adjective. After S5's epressing sentence of "I don't drink enough water.", the teacher switches to L1 to clarify the usage of "enough" by saying; "*... burda isim oldugu için "* enough water". In general, in this category there are 21 instances of explaining grammar and this represents 16, 27 % of the total and it can be said that explaining grammar is the fourth frequently used one among the other functions. In explaining the use of code-switching, Duff and Polio (1990) state that one of the reasons behind teachers' switches is explaining grammar, and the data gathered in the research setting display a similar picture.

4.1.5. CS for Managing Class

In addition to the function of "explaining grammar", according to Duff and Polio (1990), the other reason for switching is for the aim of "managing the class". Similarly, Moran (2009, p. 75) indicates one of the most important reasons of teachers' CS to Turkish in the classroom is about the management of the classroom and she adds "Teachers code switch to activate, discipline and direct the learners to signal a topic shift, to draw attention, to highlight what she has said, to respond the students' L1 use and to give feedback.". Following data displays the instances of code-switching that serve to the purpose of managing the class in a more efficient way:

Extract 5 : CS for Managing Class

96	T:	Yes, let's start with 9.A.] Page hundred, let's start.
97	S8:	*Hocam, 9. Ünitenin hepsi dahil mi?* [Tr.]
98	T: →	Yes probably. *Tam belli değil dahil olabilir de olamayabilir de*. [Tr.] It changes according to other classes. *Diğer sınıflara bağlı*. [Tr.] Yes we have a new text here but before this part, next page speaking and reading. Look at the picture from one to six in which picture can you see somebody is dreaming, somebody getting a fine, somebody winning a raffle, something snoring, somebody being arrested, some passengers looking amazed ok? Match these vocabulary items with these pictures ok? Match the items with the pictures here (++++) and also look up for the unknown words ok? Check the unknown words (++++++++).

In this extract, the teacher is giving information about the number of the page that

they will deal with and S8 asks a question; "*Hocam, 9. ünitenin hepsi dahil mi*?" The teacher switches to L1 by saying; "*Tam belli değil olabilir de olmayabilir de*." in order to answer and give feedback to students' L1 use. CS for managing class represents 11, 62 % of the total with its 15 instances and it is the fifth frequently used one compared to the other functions that switches serve.

4.1.6. CS for Other Reasons

Moran (2009, p. 85) puts forward that there are some instances that are not easy to clarify as there are not any clear reasons to explain CS and the term "other" can be used to categorize these instances such as; "… inexplicable ones, gap fillers, and no direct equivalent in L2" .

Extract 6: CS for Other Reasons

40	T:	Time.
41	SS:	Uncountable.
42	T:	And good friends.
43	SS:	Uncountable.]
44	T: →	[*Şu an sadece countable, uncountable'ı söyledik*. [Tr.] Have you finished? Ok, yes the third one, yes, Ça.

In this extract, the teacher teaches uncountable and countable nouns and in order to help students to differentiate between uncountable and countable nouns, he gives examples such as; "time, good friends, etc." and wants the students to categorize them as countable or uncountable ones. After getting students' responses, teacher switches from English to Turkish to express something very simple; "*Şu an sadece countable, uncountable'i söyledik.*" He could also express the sentence given above easily in L2 but he prefers switching to L1 without any reason. In general, CS for other reasons represents 6, 20 % of the total with its 8 instances, so it is the least frequent one among the other usage of switches.

5. Conclusion and Limitations

The present study aims to investigate the general situation of CS to Turkish, and the different functions that they serve in one of the state universities in Turkey. As the first outcome of the present research it can be observed that CS is a viable strategy that EFL teachers in the research setting frequently resort to. As for the functions of CS in the EFL setting, it was found out that teachers exploit code switching for mainly translation, checking understanding, explaining procedures and giving directions, explaining grammar and managing the class. Among these code switching instances, CS for translation and checking understanding appear to be at the top of the list. Both of these code switching occurrences denote that teachers tend to utilize code switching phenomenon for providing students extra help during the teaching process. In this sense, it would be suffice to say that the findings of the study are in line with the

previous studies that focus on use of L1. It must be noted here that the study bear certain limitations. Firstly, the number of the students and teachers involved in the study is far from being inclusive, and the research setting provides only a limited picture. Also, proficiency level of both teachers and students were not taken into consideration. Further researches that focus on wider samples and controlling various variables would shed a brighter light in the field.

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Appendix 1

Transcription Key

T: Teachers turn

Mu, Is, El, Ça, …: Identified student turns,

S1, S2, S3, S4 …: Unidentified student turns,

SS: Students,

[

]: Overlapping speech,

[Tr.]: Utterances in Turkish and Turkish parts are given in italic,

(+): Pause (number of '+' indicates the seconds)

→ **:** shows the teacher's CS.

[inaudible]: For the parts that can't be heard.