

INVESTIGATING IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD TEACHERS' CODE SWITCHING

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ABSTRACT

Code switching is defined as change in language teaching to help learners understand the EFL points. Code switching can be enjoyed at different times in the EFL classes by the teachers and may be as a safe help to understand and comprehend the points and materials. The present paper is to analyze and study the Iranian learners' attitudes toward teachers' code switching in EFL classrooms. The researchers enjoyed a questionnaire adopted from a study done by Yao (2011). The questionnaire had 20 items in different topics. The learners' attitudes toward the questionnaire's items were stated in percentage form. The findings showed that most of the learners had a positive look toward code switching by their teachers because some EFL points are really difficult to understand and it is better to change the language of teaching and help learners achieve the EFL points.

Key words: code switching; attitude; Iranian learners; EFL classes

Introduction

English in developing countries plays an important role and it is taught as a foreign language. It is paid attention a lot recently and most people living in developing countries consider it as an important tool to communicate with other nations and countries. English is learnt and taught through different methods. One of the common method to deliver the points is code switching. Code switching is defined as "the process whereby a speaker goes back and forth between one or more languages or varieties of a language to achieve discourse functions" (Asali, 2011, p. 5).

Code switching is seen in EFL classes repeatedly to teach different points and notes related to English as a foreign language. It is stated that code switching is chiefly discussed and enjoyed in linguistics branch of a language (Moradi, 2014). It is believed that code switching can happens within the same sentence or structure calling intrasentential or includes switches from a language to the other between structures or sentences calling intersentential (Ahmad Shah, Armia & Ibrahim, 2013). It is also claimed that code switching can be considered as a usual practice of multilingual or bilingual that can be expanded as an outcome of the speakers' habits for the especial goals (Afizah & Al-Hourani, 2013).

The learners who learn English as a foreign language sometimes do not understand their teachers' aims when teaching the target language; therefore, the teacher may switch his language to native language and explains in learners' first language. It is believed that code can be enjoyed to cover any type of structure that two persons use for talking and also have communication (Iqbal, 2011). Code switching sometimes is considered as a sole method to deliver the points and notes related to English. It is believed that lately some researches have an idea that code switching plays an essential role in considering second or foreign language (Jakobsson & Rydén, 2010); therefore, considering code switching as a method of passing the points can be important and in some situations necessary in EFL classes. It is also claimed that code switching happens in speech as partners of the context alter languages or among various varieties of one language (Hong Parr, 2013).

The present research attempts to know the Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward teachers' code switching in EFL classes. EFL learners as one of the most important participants in EFL classes have different ideas toward the method of teaching and these attitudes can help to achieve the possible goals in

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EFL classes. The learners' attitudes toward EFL teachers' code switching help also the teachers who teach English as a foreign language because the teachers should know their learners' intentions and also needs to satisfy and help them to understand and comprehend the English points. The learners' attitudes can also be as a good source to know their possible shortcomings and strengths in EFL classes; therefore, the present study can be a good source to know and find these problems by the learners. The present study searches Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward code switching to understand how the students see code switching as a method of teaching points in EFL classrooms.

1. Review of the literature

1.1. *Studies in Code Switching*

The studies of the code switching can be viewed from different views by the researchers. The methodology and also the way of gathering data toward these studies are very important because sometimes these ways are the subject of considering the notes and also points. The subjects of the studies are different and have also different functions meaning that sometimes it was written and studied to know the functions of code switching. Sometimes they are done to know the reasons of enjoying code switching in EFL classes, sometimes they are done to know the attitudes of the teachers toward enjoying code switching e.g. code-switching in Iranian elementary EFL classrooms by Rezvani and Eslami Rasekh (2011), teachers' code-switching to L1 in EFL classroom by Jingxia (2010).

The issue of switching in a linguistic context in target language teaching was not a chief matter for different studies in the past. But these days code switching has been paid attention a lot among the learners and teachers (Gulzar, 2010). By considering and studying different articles it can be claimed that code switching can occur within clauses, words and sentences (Abdel Jalil, 2009).

1.2. *Teachers and Students' Attitudes toward Code Switching*

The views and looks toward code switching are different among two important members of the EFL classes, i.e. teachers and learners because each member of the class sees code switching to meet his needs. It is believed that most of the people in educational and social places disagree with code switching and never encourage learners to enjoy it because they believe that it has a relationship with semilingualism, mental confusion, alingualism, interference and fossilization (Dhaouadi, 2006).

Code switching is enjoyed to transfer the points which are difficult to understand through the target language. It is believed that sometimes the persons who enjoy two languages at the same time are not able to enjoy suitable structures or lexical items and also they do not know a suitable way of translating a sample point; therefore they may lead to code switching (Asali, 2011).

Code switching can also be helpful for two members of EFL classes because the target points are not always easy to transfer or comprehend. It is believed that code switching can be considered as a helpful device to assist in learning English (Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009). By considering the previous statement, the roles of the learners and teachers in EFL classes should be considered; therefore, their attitudes toward code switching can be important and useful to hold a better situation to teach and learn. It is believed that most of the people consider code switching as a structure that has no grammar in blending the languages and also mentioned that people who enjoy code switching have no knowledge toward the language in a sufficient mode to converse (Jegade, 2012).

It was also mentioned that although the key word of the study, i.e. code switching characterizes the discourse of instructor and learners, instructors' code switching is not all the time done consciously, meaning that they are not all the time aware of its roles like topic switch, affective and repetitive roles that could be beneficial in language learning when applied in a suitable way. It was said that in topic switch samples the instructor may switch codes when dealing with the structure of a language creating a bridge from something that is familiar (mother tongue language) to the something which is not familiar (new target language content) so that the teacher exploits learners' mother tongue learning experience to improve their knowledge of target language (Dhaouadi, 2006).

It is also claimed that code switching is blending of sentences, phrases and also words from two separate language structures (Ayeomoni, 2006) that can be called the function of code switching in a language and be useful to understand the importance of code switching. It is also held that the students who took part in EFL classes were rarely allowed to enjoy code switching and the information which are authentic were very difficult to receive in 1970s–1980s (Zabrodskaia, 2007).

It is believed that enjoying mother tongue within a code switching environment, some scholars and instructors stipulate that it manifests lack of credibility and incompetence (Horasan, 2014). The affective role refers to the contribution of code switching in making a supportive language area in the class which assists the instructor construct solidarity and intimate communications with the pupils. While the repetitive role refers to the instructor's adding clarity to the subject of the unit by code switching among the foreign language and the mother tongue language when teaching is not clear to assist efficient understanding (Dhaouadi, 2006).

In a similar research on the effects of code switching on school pupils' talking, it was reported the impressive talent of the speakers who are bilingual to switch with ease at different notes in talking; it was also noted and believed that code switching by learning two languages is not due to shortage of proficiency, but it is used to express communicative knowledge to gain conversational aims during partner interaction. It was proposed that younger students show more lexical item code switching comparing older pupils not because of incomplete knowing of one of the languages, rather and in some samples, learners may be momentarily unable to gain a word for an idea in the language in use, but can gain its equivalent promptly in the other language. Further, it was stated that older learners code switch when they learn the elements of the other language and understand the meaning of the intended opinion more accurately.

It is argued that people select their codes according to their individual or/and communication with their peers or partners; therefore, it can be as a role of negotiating and debating (Jagero & Odongo, 2011). It is mentioned that, based on the learners and teachers' attitudes, code switching is an option which is enjoyed by speakers of two or more languages in their communication with others (Abdul-Zahra, 2010). It was also argued that code switching increases in learners who are bilingual as they have more exposure to the second language, and it is enjoyed as a resource to increase communicative competence. As these learners who were bilingual got older, their exposure to different social and linguistic knowledge rise, and these experiences in turn affect and enlarge their knowledge and ability to enjoy their different languages and to deploy code switching for sociolinguistic aims and goals (Dhaouadi, 2006).

Studies also showed that speakers with the highest degree of bilingual communicative competence are the ones who use code switching in different situations as a strategy to meet their conversational aims and to communicate with their partners. This case suggests a relationship which is positive between bilingual code switching and language proficiency. The considered idea is in contradiction with the opinion that code switching is a sign of communicative incompetence or language deficiency. Instead, it was claimed that code switching is recently observed as one of the abilities the children who are bilingual use during cooperative learning areas.

Moreover, it is stated that students' attitudes can be as an outcome of understanding or comprehending enjoyed by the learners in a collaborative manner; therefore, each persons' consideration and aspect is inborn and is influenced by factors like culture, behavior and belief (Hamzehlou Moghadam, Abul Samad & Rahmani Shahraki, 2012). In a study called "teachers' patterns of alternation between English the majority language and the target languages in a foreign language context", it was found that instructors' code switching did not make easy to pupils' target language learning. It is assumed that the foreign language instructor is often the only source of foreign language input. Therefore, instructor's code switching practice should be minimized not to prevent students from the chances of target language intake and for authentic conversation in the foreign language. By studying the relationship between especial pedagogic functions and code switching, it was not found every consistency in the target language use by the samples in the research. It was not found that there was a systematic relationship between particular pedagogic functions and the teachers' language choices (Dhaouadi, 2006).

2. Research questions

In the present study the possible attitudes of the EFL learners toward code switching were gathered and the following matters were considered:

1. What are Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward teachers' code switching in EFL classes?
2. What are differences and similarities among Iranian EFL learners' attitudes toward teachers' code switching in EFL classes?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

Fifty EFL learners participated and took part in the present study sharing their attitudes toward teachers' code switching in EFL classes. They were both male and female. They learnt English as a foreign language and their native language were Persian, Iran's national language. They were both university and also school students. Their ages were from 15 to 40 who were in EFL language institutes in Sari, North of Iran.

3.2. Instrumentation

The only instrument of the study was a questionnaire adapted from Yao (2011). The items of the questionnaire were modified by the researchers and distributed among EFL learners to state their attitudes toward teachers' code switching in EFL classes. The instrument has twenty items related to the functions and roles of code switching in EFL classes in four parts.

3.3. Procedure

A hundred Iranian EFL learners were asked to state their attitudes toward teachers' code switching in EFL classes. The learners were selected randomly by the researchers. The research was done in some EFL classes in some English institutes in Sari in the north of Iran. The related statistics toward the aim of the research was calculated after gathering the data from the questionnaire distributed among Iranian EFL learners and its statistics was considered and reported by the researchers.

3.4. Results and Discussion

There are two research questions regarding the topic of the study. The learners stated their attitudes toward teachers' code switching in EFL classes. The results demonstrate that EFL learners' attitudes were different and each learner has his attitude toward teachers' code switching. They had different attitudes toward each item; however, some of their attitudes were the same. Some of these attitudes stated by the EFL learners could be reasonable and useful sources to teach in Iranian EFL classes and the teachers who teach English know their learners' attitudes toward code switching.

Table 1: Distribution of the Number of Each Item Stated by the Learners in the Questionnaire

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	30	15	3	2	0
2	35	13	2	0	0
3	15	20	10	3	2
4	20	10	10	6	4
5	15	15	18	1	1
6	20	13	7	6	4
7	35	10	3	2	0
8	20	10	20	0	0
9	30	10	6	3	1
10	38	10	1	12	0
11	15	22	13	0	0
12	13	14	10	5	8
13	14	20	3	3	10
14	15	20	5	8	2
15	10	22	6	8	4
16	23	10	7	3	7
17	15	10	6	6	13
18	10	12	15	8	5
19	18	14	3	6	9
20	20	13	7	4	6

4. Learners' attitudes toward EFL teachers' code switching

The learners' attitudes toward EFL teachers' code switching were as follows:

4.1 Teachers' Attitudes toward Classroom Code Switching

This part of the questionnaire consists of five items with different subjects. The highest percentage refers to item 2 that seventy percent of the learners strongly agree with this item. Sixty percent of the learners who participated in this paper strongly agreed with item one and thirty percent agreed, six percent had no idea toward the item, no one strongly disagreed and four percent disagreed whereas in a study done by Yao (2011) forty six percent of the learners strongly agreed, forty seven percent agreed, five percent had no idea, only two percent of the students disagreed and no one strongly disagreed with the first item. By considering the attitudes of the learners toward item one, it can be said that the highest numbers of the learners strongly agreed with this item.

To respond to the second item of the first part, seventy percent of the learners strongly agreed, twenty six percent of the learners agreed, four percent had no idea and no one strongly disagreed or disagreed

with the second item while in the study studied by Yao (2011) sixteen percent of the learners agreed or strongly agreed with the item, ninety percent of the learners had not any idea and others strongly disagreed or disagreed with the item. Most of the learners of this paper strongly disagreed with the second item and it shows the importance of the item in the questionnaire.

The three other items were also answered by the learners who participated in this study. The highest percentage toward the remaining items refers to item three in which forty percent of the learners agreed with the item the lowest percentage goes back to the fifth item that only two percent of the students strongly disagreed or disagreed however in a study studied by Yao (2011) the highest percentage that the learners strongly agreed refers to the fifth item and the lowest percentage that the learners strongly disagreed refers to fourth item that the learners both strongly disagreed and disagreed with that item.

4.2 Attitudes toward Code switching in Relation to Subject Access

This part of the questionnaire also has five items like the first part. The learners who participated in this study had different views and ideas toward the items of the second part. The second part starts from item 6 to item 10. Forty percent of the learners strongly agreed with the sixth item and the percentage of the items answered by the learners to agree, have no idea, strongly disagree and disagree are as twenty six, fourteen, twelve and eight percent respectively, but in a study done by Yao (2011) seventeen percent of the learners strongly agreed, thirty one percent of them agreed with the item and the percentage of the learners who had no idea, disagreed and strongly disagreed are twenty seven, twenty one and four respectively.

The learners also stated their ideas toward item seven as: seventy percent strongly agreed, twenty percent agreed, six percent had no idea, four percent disagreed and no one strongly disagreed. As it was seen to analyze the second item of the second part, it can be stated that seventy percent of the learners strongly agree which indicates that most of the learners who took part in the present study stated that they strongly agreed with the item and it shows the rank of this item among the other items whereas in the study done by Yao (2011) ninety three percent of the learners strongly agreed or agreed, two percent of them had no idea and five percent of the others disagreed or strongly disagreed with the item.

Item eight deals with teachers who switch codes from English to Persian which can better explain cultural topics in the text. The cultural points and notes are always challenging by both learners and teachers and they have their own ideas toward culture. It is very interesting that the percentage of the learners who strongly agreed and had no idea toward the eighth item is the same meaning that forty percent strongly agreed and also forty percent had no ideas toward it. Twenty percent of the learners agreed with the item and no one strongly disagreed or disagreed with the eighth item while in Yao's study (2011) the most number of the learners, 86%, of the learners strongly agreed or agreed with the item, ten percent of them had no idea, and only four percent of the remaining learners disagreed or strongly disagreed with the item.

To know the responses of the learners is always a difficult task in the classroom. The ninth item of the questionnaire was dealt with this importance in EFL classes and the learners stated their attitudes toward the role of code switching to elicit responses. In stating the attitudes toward item nine, sixty percent of the learners strongly agreed, twenty percent agreed, twelve percent had no idea, six percent disagreed and only two percent of the learners strongly disagreed. Again, the highest percentage goes back to strongly agree showing that most of the learners strongly agreed with code switching of the teachers to elicit the responses. To compare the result of the present study with a study done by Yao (2011), the results in that study shows that eighty one percent of the learners agreed or strongly agreed with the item, fourteen percent of the learners had no idea and five percent of the student took part strongly disagreed or disagreed with the item.

Seventy six percent of the learners strongly agreed with item ten that is the highest percentage of the items in the second part. The highest percentage of item ten shows that most of the learners believed in the fact that a teacher can enjoy code switching in EFL classes to explain the points because sometime the sole way to teach EFL points is code switching like idioms and also proverbs and some grammar points while in the study done by Yao (2011), eighty eight percent of the learners strongly agreed or

agreed with the tenth item, six percent of the learners had not any opinion and others strongly disagreed or disagreed with item number ten.

4.3 Attitudes toward Code Switching in Relation to Classroom Management

How to manage an EFL classes is always an important point to consider and is changed to one of the most important issues for most teachers to be employed in EFL classes. The third part of the questionnaire is dealt with some important items to know how code switching can help the teachers in EFL classes and the learners as one of the most important elements of the EFL classes stated their attitudes toward them. The highest percentage of five items in the third part turns back to the last item of this part i.e. item sixteen in the questionnaire. Twenty three among fifty learners who participated in this study stated that they strongly agreed with item sixteen and it is about half of the numbers of the learners who participated in the study and no one disagreed or strongly disagreed with item eleven. The results of the third part of the questionnaire show that in learners' ideas teachers can enjoy code switching to direct the learners and code switching shall not be banned in all situations and issues toward EFL. The learners as one of the elements in EFL classes believed that code switching should be enjoyed whenever the teachers feel that it can be as a facilitator to pass the points to the learners. In the study done by Yao (2011) the highest percentage of the questionnaire which the learners agreed or strongly agreed is for the fifteenth item that fifty percent of the learners agreed with the item and thirteen percent of the learners strongly disagreed with item number twelve.

4.4 Attitudes toward Code Switching in Relation to Interpersonal Relations

The fourth and also the last part of the questionnaire is analyzed and considered carefully by EFL learners who were selected randomly to state their points. In response to the first item of the fourth part, thirty percent of the learners strongly agreed, twenty percent agreed, twelve percent had no idea, twelve percent disagreed and twenty six percent strongly disagreed. It is observed that more than twenty percent of the students of the present paper strongly disagreed with the item meaning that in learners' ideas who stated strongly disagreed code switching cannot be used as a means to encourage the learners whereas in the study carried out by Yao (2011), six percent of the learners strongly agreed with the item, thirty four percent of the learners agreed with the item and the percentage of the learners who disagreed and strongly disagreed are nineteen and seven, respectively. Thirty four percent of the learners also had no comment of the item.

Thirty percent of the learners who took part in the study strongly believed that code switching can be enjoyed by their learners to praise their classmates. Praising the learners who study English as a foreign language is always encouraged by the experts because the learners should believe themselves and also find their self-confidence. The data gathered by the research show that twenty percent of the learners agreed, twelve percent had no ideas, twelve percent disagreed and twenty six percent of the learners strongly disagreed. The results show that half of the learners strongly agreed or agreed with the seventeenth item and it shows the place of code switching to praise among learners who learn English as a foreign language; however, in a study done by Yao (2011) thirty two percent of the learners strongly agreed or agreed, twenty nine of them had no idea and thirty nine percent of the learners had not any view toward the item.

Sixty four percent of the learners who selected and participated in the present paper strongly agreed or agreed with item number eighteen. Thirty six participants stated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the mentioned item and fifteen learners had no idea about code switching to create a funny class showing that thirty percent of the learners were not sure toward the item while in a study done by Yao (2011) seventy one percent of the learners agreed or strongly agreed with the item, only nine percent of the learners strongly disagreed or disagreed with the item and twenty percent of the students didn't have any idea.

It indicates that the learners' responses can increase the motivation of the learners to participate in class discussions. One of the methods to have a comment for the learners' answers can be enjoying code switching. In analyzing item nineteen it was found that more than half of the learners strongly agreed or

agreed with item nineteen and thirty percent of the learners had opposite ideas and they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the item. Thirty two learners agreed or strongly disagreed with the item and they would like to have a comment by the teachers through code switching. Just three participants consisting six percent of the learners in the present study had no certain ideas toward item nineteen and they stated that they were not sure about the place of code switching to comment the learners' responses; however, more than half of the learners, 53%, agreed or strongly agreed with the item, twenty percent of the learners disagreed or strongly disagreed with the item and twenty seven percent had no idea and opinion.

The last item was studied by the learners and following statistics were gathered by the researcher: Forty percent strongly agreed, twenty six agreed, fourteen percent were not sure, eight percent disagreed and others i.e. twelve percent strongly disagreed. To discuss and negotiate with the learners changed to an interesting task in EFL classes among learners and teachers. Code switching again sometimes can be as an only way to express your idea and intentions. The results show that about half of the learners strongly agreed with code switching to express your points to discuss your teachers to show that he understands the points. In the paper done by Yao (2011) sixty six percent of the learners agreed or strongly agreed with the last item, thirteen of those learners disagreed or strongly disagreed with the item and twenty – one percent of them had no idea.

5. Conclusions & Pedagogical Implications

The gathered data and information toward the learners' attitudes toward EFL teachers' code switching in EFL classes found that learners who learn English as a foreign language believe in code switching as one of the most important method to teach English as a foreign language and in some situations it is the only and sole way to teach EFL points in Iran. It was also considered that code switching can be enjoyed by the teachers in EFL classes to clarify the points behind EFL because most of the learners strongly agree with code switching to make simple the possible subject matter in EFL classes although some others disagree with this fact. By looking at the result of the questionnaire, both sides of code switching can be considered because all the learners who participate in the present study are not strongly agree with all the items nor strongly disagree and their attitudes are variable therefore considering these attitudes can be good to teach, manage and also provide a suitable and desirable EFL setting for the learners.

Learners and teachers are two important sides of EFL classes and each of them has its own especial place and rank in this environment. Doing the present research can be useful to respect the learners as one of the most important elements of the EFL classes because their ideas and attitudes are very important for the teachers who teach English as a foreign language because EFL classes are held for them to know the important points and notes of English. The learners' attitudes toward code switching can be a way to teach EFL to them because their wanting is manifested in the present study and it can be a good source for all those who deal with EFL points and settings.

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Questionnaire

Part 1 Teacher' persona

1. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian or from Persian to English can express themselves clearly in both languages.
2. Teachers who switch codes from Persian to English or from English to Persian may cause difficulty in understanding.
3. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian or from Persian to English pollute languages.
4. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian are deficient in English.
5. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian are proficient in English.

Part 2 Subject access

6. Teachers who switch codes from Persian to English or from English to Persian can do so in all kinds of topics in class.
7. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian can better explain the grammatical points and lexical items in the text.
8. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian can better explain cultural topics in the text.
9. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian can better elicit responses from students.
10. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian can better clarify the lesson content taught.

Part 3 Classroom management

11. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian can better clarify task instruction.
12. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian can better discipline the students.
13. Teachers who code-switch from English to Persian can better engage students' attention.
14. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian can better request quiet.
15. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian can better direct (call on) students.

Part 4 CS for interpersonal relations

16. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian can better encourage students.
17. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian can better praise students.
18. Teachers who switch codes from Persian to English or from English to Persian can better enliven the atmosphere of class (e.g. make a joke for humor).
19. Teachers who code-switch from English to Persian can better comment on the students' response.
20. Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian can better negotiate with students (reduce distance).