

The Use of Code-switching in Teaching Asian Tertiary-Level EFL Students Writing Skill

Ho Thi Lai, M.TESOL

English Department

Ho Chi Minh City University of Natural Resources and Environment

236B, Le Van Sy Street, Ward 1, Tan Binh District

Ho Chi Minh City

Vietnam

htlai@hcmunre.edu.vn

Phuong Doan, M.A.

haphuongdoan119@gmail.com

Abstract

The dispute over code-switching (CS) dates back to the 19th century. Numerous studies have been carried out to investigate how code-switching functions, the perception toward code-switching and the motive behind the use of code-switching. However, the use of code-switching in teaching writing skill has yet to be explored deeply, specifically for tertiary-level students in Asia. Therefore, in order to fulfil the gap in the current existing literature, this paper looks into how code-switching is employed so as to teach writing skill to Asian EFL tertiary-level students.

Keywords: Code-switching, Functions, Perception, Writing skill, Asian EFL students.

Introduction

Using the native language in foreign language classes has generated controversy since the 19th century (Hall & Cook, 2012). In other words, in terms of language education, code-switching is one of the most contentious issues (Ellis, 2013). Because of this, more studies have been carried out by linguists on the topic of code-switching in pedagogical settings (Macaro, 2001; Moore, 2002; Reini, 2008; Üstünel, 2004; Üstünel & Seedhouse, 2005; Cancino & Diaz, 2020). Undoubtedly, the findings of these studies will lead to varied standpoints.

Concerning the use of code switching, there are two main perspectives. While one side is against code-switching and advocates for teaching entirely in the target language, the other is in favor of code-switching and advocates using CS to some extent.

On one hand, there is much opposition against the L1 use in classes, especially in EFL

classroom. Ellis stated that excessive native language use may hinder students absorbing the target language (1997). According to many teachers and researchers, code-switching in the classroom is a counterproductive behavior and indicates that students will not be able to absorb the target language (Willis, 1981; Cummins & Swain, 2014). According to Macaro (2001), codeswitching is the mother tongue's disruption of the acquisition of the target language. Cook (2001) backed up his claims and pointed out that the input of the target language would be impacted by the use of the mother tongue. They all question how learners will be able to fully grasp target language conversations if they are always using their mother tongue.

On the other hand, it has been claimed and demonstrated time and time again that using a target language exclusively in the classroom restricts students' potential and their rate of language acquisition (Levine, 2003; Polio & Duff, 1994; Kim & Elder, 2005). Some researchers claim that moderate and strategic code-switching to the mother tongue may bring about numerous advantages (Rezvani & Rasekh, 2011; Levine, 2011; Kang, 2008; Kim and Elder, 2005; Macaro, 2001; Cook, 2001). In support of this assertion, Hall & Cook (2012) contend that professors should not discourage students from utilizing code switching because it occurs naturally in language classrooms. He contends that maximizing the target language does not require that the mother tongue be completely disregarded during lessons (Bilgin, 2016). Sampson (2012) further claimed that ceasing to utilize a first language entirely would be equivalent to ending classroom interaction. He rejected the idea that students should speak while using their target language, arguing that studies have shown that code-switching might have an impact on classroom instruction.

There have previously been numerous studies that focus on the purposes and motivations of code-switching as well as perception of CS (Cahyani & Barnett, 2018; Bilgin, 2016; Ahmad, 2009; Song & Lee, 2019; Rezvani & Rasekh, 2011; Ibrahim et al., 2013; Nabifar & Khalilzad, 2017; Temesgen & Hailu, 2022). However, the use of code-switching when teaching language skills, particularly writing skills, to EFL tertiary-level students in Asia has not yet been thoroughly investigated, which motivates me to obtain a deeper understanding of this topic. Existing studies and papers on the different kinds and functions of code-switching in EFL teaching as well as teachers' attitudes toward code-switching will be reviewed in order to identify any gap and possibly answer the research questions. It will also be examined as to what extent code-switching is used to teach tertiary-level EFL learners writing skill. The suggested research questions are listed below:

- 1) What are the types of code-switching and the functions of code-switching in EFL English language teaching?
- 2) How do teachers perceive the use of code-switching in teaching Asian EFL tertiary-level students?
- 3) To what extent is code-switching implemented in teaching Asian EFL learners writing skill?

The study's findings are important from theoretical and practical standpoints. From a theoretical standpoint, the results will add to the current existing literature on the use of code-switching in the instruction of English language skills to tertiary-level EFL learners, specifically writing competence, as this is a topic that has yet to receive much in-depth and thorough research. Practically speaking, the findings can help EFL practitioners, educators, or teachers reevaluate how they teach writing to EFL tertiary-level students in the classroom. As a fellow English instructor who teaches tertiary-level EFL students, the discovery will undoubtedly assist me in developing appropriate teaching discourse as I develop my students' writing skills.

As it gives a greater knowledge of the forms, roles of code-switching and its advantages in enhancing language acquisition, this paper is equally useful for policymakers. This research would also add to the existing literature already available on code-switching, particularly with regard to its application in speaking classrooms. The results of this study's findings would also provide more profound understanding of the use of code-switching in English language skill classes and its purposes as a linguistic tool in EFL classrooms. Finally, this work will serve as a foundation for future scholars to investigate new facets of code-switching as a crucial linguistic method.

The scope of the study will revolve around EFL students at tertiary level and focus on Asian EFL tertiary-level students only. Therefore, studies outside of Asia or studies concentrating on students from different age groups will not be the focus.

Definition of Key Terms

There are several definitions of code-switching created by scholars and linguists.

Code-switching, for instance, was defined as a phenomenon of switching from one language to another in the same discourse (Nunan & Carter, 2001), whereas classroom code-switching is also defined as the use of more than one linguistic code by the teacher and students alternately during lessons (Lin, 2008). It is also further defined that CS is the systematic alternation of two or more languages in a single statement or discourse for communication related reasons (Levine, 2011; Gardner-Chloros, 2009). Lin's definition will serve as the definition of reference for this investigation.

Writing allows authors to communicate with others by putting their ideas and thoughts in writing. Writers must find, organize, and explain their thoughts through a mental process (Wingersky, 1999, p.4). Therefore, it is important to consider writing-related aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, theme, and organization while teaching writing skills (Hartfiel et al., 1985, p.89). However, just two sub-skills, namely grammar and vocabulary, will be investigated in this study.

Literature Review and Analysis

Comparing Types of Code-switching

There are two main kinds of code-switching discussed in most studies linked to it, which are inter-sentential code-switching and intra-sentential code-switching. For instance, intra-sentential code-switching and inter-sentential code-switching are two types that Myers-Scotton (1993) categorizes when discussing codeswitching. Kashi (2018) solely looked at the impacts of inter- and intra-sentential code-switching when examining the effects of code-switching on learning the past tense.

Nonetheless, tag or extra-sentential code-switching is a different kind of code-switching (Muysken, 2011). As a result, there are three main types of code-switching from a grammatical standpoint.

A study by Ataş & San-Simşek (2021) found that discourse markers and phrase/sentence level shifts were the most frequently used code-switching types, suggesting that intra-sentential code-switching is the most prevalent type of code-switching. This is also in line with research that indicated that inter-sentential switching was less common than intra-sentential switching (Rezvani, 2011; Rahimi & Jafari, 2011). In a similar class pattern, the study by Yong & Fong (2020) also shows that novice teachers have the tendency to use intra-sentential switching whereas experienced teachers have the tendency to use inter-sentential switching. In contrast, Bhatti & Said (2018) discovered that inter-sentential code-switching and tag were the most prevalent patterns noticed when watching the lectures.

When it comes to the purpose and also effect of types of code-switching on learning, Kashi (2018) found that there is a substantial difference between learning the past tense when intra-sentential and inter-sentential code switching are utilized. More specifically, it was discovered that inter-sentential code-switching has a greater impact on learning past tense in comparison with intra-sentential code-switching. This is in line with Novianti's study (2003), of which findings asserted that inter-sentential switching is a more effective kind of code-switching for grammar training. The results of these studies, however, are at odds with those of Kebeya (2013), who came to the conclusion that students who are often exposed to intra-sentential code-switching had much better performance than those who are frequently exposed to inter-sentential switching.

Functions of Code-switching in EFL Classroom

According to Cahyani & Barnett's (2018) study, teachers primarily switch codes for educational, managerial, and social purposes. Also supporting this are research by Temesgen & Hailu (2022), Ataş & San-imşek (2021), Ferguson (2009), Grant & Nguyen (2017),

Ferguson (2003) and others. It is acceptable to assume that the knowledge construction, classroom management, and interpersonal relations are the three major purposes why teachers use code-switching in the classroom.

Knowledge Construction

When it comes to the purpose of knowledge building, teachers primarily use code-switching to vividly explain, translate, and illustrate the knowledge. The results of the studies by Duff & Polio (1994), Bashir & Naveed (2015), Bhatti & Said (2018) and Rezvani & Rasekh (2011) are consistent with the finding of Yong & Fong's study (2020), which revealed that for EFL classrooms in which English is considered as the target language, both novice and experienced teachers use the native language during the lessons mainly for explanation and translation of lexical items and grammar. However, this study differs with Yao's (2011), which discovered that the primary knowledge-constructing functions for code-switching are interpretation, translation, and questioning. This discrepancy may be caused by the viewpoint of various class kinds, each of which uses code-switching differently in their classrooms.

Code-switching is a method that teachers utilize to better clarify instruction during class (Yao, 2011; Grant & Nguyen, 2017), stress points, and cite others' words to aid students' learning in addition to explaining, translating, and questioning the topic (Gulzar, 2010; Ibrahim & Armia, 2013). This is consistent with research by Bhatti & Said (2018) and Ataş & San-Simşek (2021), whose study found that code-switching is employed when translating new terms, clarifying challenging ideas, restating crucial details, providing extra information, and changing the subject. Additionally, according to their study, teachers primarily employed L1 when tutoring students after lessons. Similarly, it is also discovered that teachers utilized code switching as a means of instruction to provide explanation, an introduction to a new topic, or an additional comment (Camilleri, 2001).

Classroom Management

A vast majority of studies relating to the functions of code-switching mention the classroom-managing function of it (Yong & Fong, 2020; Yao, 2011; Duff & Polio, 1994; Alrabah & Aldaihani, 2016). Bhatti & Said (2018) claim that teachers often utilize code-switching to capture students' attention as well as uphold discipline with them prior to, during, and after lessons. According to studies by Bashir & Naveed (2015), Ferguson (2003), Grant & Nguyen (2017), and Ferguson (2009), code-switching is used to maintain disciplinary rules and control learners' behavior through praise and criticism.

Interpersonal Relations

In addition to the previously mentioned two purposes, the interpersonal aspect is

another important reason why teachers choose to code-switch. It is recommended that professors use their native tongues to motivate and involve students in the course, offer praise or criticism, and encourage learning (Yao, 2011; Yong & Fong, 2020; Ataş, & San-imşek, 2021; Bashir & Naveed, 2015). This will help students acquire a second language.

The widespread usage of code-switching is due to the importance for EFL teachers to give students a successful classroom experience with less stress. According to Istifci's study (2019), code-switching is used to foster a positive environment and express one's personality. Furthermore, according to Ferguson (2003; 2009), the use of CS helps to humanize the educational setting. Rezavni & Rasekh's (2011) findings support earlier researchers' findings (Duff & Polio, 1990; Hobbs & Payne, 2010) that language teachers commonly use the native language to perform a variety of pedagogical and social tasks that could all improve interaction between teachers and learners within classroom.

Additionally, code-switching is utilized to improve interaction between instructors and students. According to Grant & Nguyen (2017), rather than pedagogical considerations, the teacher's CS may occasionally be heavily influenced by affective factors. Their research indicates that CS is used to establish rapport with students and share identities. Similar to this, professors allegedly code-switched to foster solidarity and close ties with the students before, during, and after the lessons, according to Bhatti & Said (2018). Furthermore, code-switching is utilized to demonstrate sympathy and solidarity with other students, according to Gulzar (2010). In summary, it may be argued that the thoughtful and skilful use of CS can promote more open and effective teacher-student communication in the classroom.

The Correlation between Teacher's Level of Experience and Their Perception of Code-switching in Teaching EFL Tertiary-level Students

Despite having different levels of teaching experience, it seems that both experienced and novice teachers typically have a favorable attitude toward code-switching in the field of language educating. For instance, it is discovered that both novice and experienced teachers have a favorable opinion of code-switching despite their differences in experience (Yong & Fong, 2020). This finding also coincides with previous studies (Istifci, 2019; Goh & Hashim, 2006; Bhatti & Said, 2018; Lehti-Eklund, 2013; Makulloluwa, 2013; Alrabah & Aldaihani, 2016; Bilgin, 2016).

However, some educators continue to have a slightly unfavorable attitude regarding code-switching. For instance, Cheng (2013) found that professors still have a negative attitude toward code-switching even though code-switching is frequently used in classes. Although teachers claimed they did not code-switch, an investigation by Ibrahim & Armia (2013) revealed they did so for pedagogical reasons. Even though teachers reported negative attitudes toward using L1 in L2 instruction, Alrabah & Aldaihani (2016) also came to the conclusion that they did so for pedagogical and management goals. Moreover,

it is stated in some studies that teachers do have some guilt and uncomfortable feelings over using the mother tongue in the setting of foreign language classroom (Wang & Kirkpatrick, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2014).

The Correlation between Teacher's Perception of Code-switching in Teaching EFL Tertiary-level Students and the Frequency of Usage

Code-switching is more likely to be used in lessons by experienced teachers than by newer ones. For instance, the study by Yong and Fong (2020) revealed that experienced EFL teachers employed code-switching with higher frequency than novice teachers, which is consistent with earlier papers, despite the fact that both novice and experienced teachers perceive code-switching favorably (Duff & Polio, 1994; Puspawati, 2018; Bilgin, 2016; Songxaba et al., 2017).

Although teachers regularly code-switch, this does not necessarily indicate that they are incompetent in terms of English proficiency. For instance, Moghadam (2016) claimed that the more EFL teachers employ code-switching during lessons, the higher their educational level actually is.

How frequently teachers utilize code-switching is also determined by their own personal perspectives and the personality of the teachers. For instance, Istifci's research (2019) found that while both novice and experienced teachers had favorable opinions toward the use of code-switching in the classroom, they rarely used it in the courses that were observed. This is largely because of the study's context—the teachers who took part in it work in an international school where English usage is given top priority. Furthermore, it is also revealed that some teachers code-switched frequently while others did so much less (Grant & Nguyen, 2017; Istifci, 2019).

Using Code-switching in Teaching EFL Tertiary-level Students Vocabulary

When it comes to developing writing skills, vocabulary learning should be given careful consideration because second language learners must have a sizable vocabulary because this aspect of language is seen as central to it and of crucial importance to language learners (Cook, 1992; Nation, 2001).

When teaching vocabulary to EFL students, switching codes is frequently used. To give an example, it is stated that most teachers code-switch when teaching vocabulary (Istifci, 2019; Levine, 2014; Gulzar, 2010; Macaro, 2009).

Teachers commonly use students' native languages while teaching lexical items because code-switching is viewed as a beneficial teaching approach due to its high effectiveness. Students that received lexical knowledge with L1 counterparts reportedly

performed better than those who solely received L2 material (Lee & Macaro, 2013; Lee & Levine, 2020; Zhao & Macaro, 2016; Tian & Macaro, 2012; Blair & Morini, 2022). According to Macaro (2009), teachers' code-switching provided assistance for students to acquire concepts more quickly since it activates both native language and target language lexical items in the long-term memory, which allows better comprehension. As a result, the learning progress and students' understanding rate can both be enhanced by a balanced usage of the native language in EFL classes.

The frequent use of code-switching during vocabulary teaching is also attributable to students' favorable response to it as opposed to English-only instruction. According to Song & Lee (2019), it was discovered that when it came to vocabulary education, the students overwhelmingly preferred to have pictures and get instruction in their first language, whereas for English-only instruction, their objection was highly significant. As a result, it is proposed that English teachers should take code-switching into account while introducing new terms or phrases to their students rather than attempting to thoroughly explain their meanings in the English-only mode.

Overall, these results imply that code-switching could be intentionally utilized as a tactic to inform and explain word meaning, leading to higher learning performance. Comprehending the effects of code-switching on foreign language vocabulary development begins with this work.

Using Code-switching in Teaching EFL Tertiary-level Students Grammar

According to Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia (2016), grammar is thought of as the foundation for learning a second language, hence it cannot be eliminated from language instruction. In a similar spirit, Ellis (1989) places a high value on learning a new language with a focus on grammar. According to Purpura (2004), understanding grammar is crucial to learning a second language. Considering both the use and effects of code switching on grammar learning is crucial because the aim of this paper is to provide a more profound insight of the use of code-switching in teaching writing to EFL learners.

There are very few sources that discuss using code-switching to teach grammar to EFL tertiary students. There is evidence that when teaching sub-skills like grammar, teachers frequently code-switch (Istifci, 2019; Sert, 2005; Yao, 2011; Bilgin, 2016; Levine, 2014; Gulzar, 2010; Bonyadi & Bonyadi, 2021). Code-switching is frequently employed by both novice and experienced teachers while teaching students in sub-skills like grammar, vocabulary and language skill such as writing (Yong & Fong, 2020).

Numerous studies have proven that code-switching is useful in providing assistance to EFL students in acquiring grammar (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002; Kashi, 2018; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Chandler, 2003; Ellis, 2001; Ferris, 2004; Cook, 2001; Kebeya, 2013). For instance,

Cook (2001) argues that teachers can use code-switching to teach grammatical rules explicitly and assist students in better understanding them. He also acknowledges that code-switching can reduce the amount of time and effort teachers need to spend teaching grammar structures and rules.

Kashi (2018) found that there is a substantial difference between learning the past tense between when inter-sentential code-switching and intra-sentential code switching are utilized when examining the effects of various types of code-switching on grammar acquisition. More specifically, it was discovered that inter-sentential code-switching, in comparison with intra-sentential code-switching, has a greater impact on learning past tense. The results of these studies, however, contradict those of Kebeya (2013), who came to the conclusion that students when exposed to intra-sentential code-switching have much better academic performance than those who are exposed often to inter-sentential code-switching.

Conclusion

All in all, the aforementioned findings are significant and useful for the investigation as they have provided some supporting information and evidence which can help answer the research questions to a certain extent.

To begin with, it can be concluded from the findings that there are 3 types of code-switching, which include intra-sentential, inter-sentential and tag or extra-sentential code-switching. It is revealed that most teachers tend to utilize and focus on intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switching more than extra-sentential code-switching. Regarding the functions of code-switching, there are three main motives behind teachers' code-switching, namely knowledge construction, classroom management and interpersonal relation.

Moreover, when it comes to a teacher's perception towards code-switching, a vast majority of both novice and experienced teachers react positively towards code-switching. Experienced teachers seem to have a higher frequency of using code-switching during their lessons.

Finally, code-switching is also revealed to be highly effective in terms of teaching vocabulary and grammar for EFL students, as the findings revealed that students received better results when teachers code-switch than when teachers provide English-only instruction.

Implication

Numerous implications can be suggested from the results of the present investigation. To begin with, it is crucial to boost teachers' understanding of how useful code-switching is in terms of improving student comprehension. Instead of blindly following the English-only

policy and feeling guilty of code-switching, teachers need to be more open-minded and have more awareness of code-switching in order to use it as a helpful technique for teaching English. The government should also allocate more funding towards staff-training programs for EFL teachers to help them become more conscious of their own use of CS, understand its value as a teaching technique.

The findings of this paper can also be used to assist teachers, teacher trainers, practicing teachers, teaching assistants and policy makers who work in the pedagogical field. According to the study, code-switching is a normal phenomenon and a useful technique that improves student learning and aids teachers in making their points more clearly. Code-switching is not always something that should be avoided in EFL classes. Contrarily, the results show that effective and deliberate use of code-switching can improve language acquisition, aid students in expressing ideas more clearly, and assist teachers in avoiding misconceptions throughout the entire process of presenting instructional content. As a result, methods for educating candidates to use code-switching as a conscious teaching tactic in particular pedagogical settings should be included in teacher-training programs. The use of code-switching in EFL classes may be beneficial if done so sensibly in particular circumstances.

With these findings, we are much closer to knowing the answers to the questions concerning the utilization of code-switching when teaching writing skill to Asian EFL tertiary students, but much more research is still required to confirm the use of code-switching in teaching writing skill to Asian EFL tertiary students. Before academics and policymakers can make clear recommendations, more research is required.

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