

WHAT SENTENTIAL CODE DO E.F.L. STUDENTS SWITCH TO ?
THE CASE OF L2 STUDENTS OF ENGLISH AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF BORDJ BOU ARRERIDJ

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أيه نوع من التناوب اللغوي يمارسه طلاب أقسام الإنجليزية؟
دراسة حالة طلاب السنة الثانية الإنجليزية بجامعة برج بوعريريج

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Abstract:

The present paper investigates a very sociolinguistic phenomenon resulting from the linguistic contact in a multilingual setting. It attempts to shed some light on the phenomenon of code-switching as practised naturally in a very social learning environment: inside the classroom. In this educational context, code-switching is frequently found in the EFL classroom which represents a real social life as many classroom researchers have claimed. In an attempt to find answers to the motives behind students' resort to code-switching and what type of code-switching they tend to use, the researcher, being also a University teacher of English, opted for a highly qualitative method employing a structured in-class observation followed by interviews with two students as research tools. The data collected from the corpus made up of twenty students' linguistic exchanges, and the interview show that EFL students practise code-switching to fulfil both communicative and social needs. In the classroom context, inter-sentential code-switching is practised deliberately to serve as exposures for students and

also an indicator that these students are fluent bilingual speakers. Meanwhile, intra-sentential code-switching is not really a deliberate action, but rather a force of habit from the part of the participants as multilingual speakers.

keywords: code-switching; EFL classroom; multilingualism; sociolinguistics

ملخص باللغة العربية:

تبحث هذه الورقة ظاهرة اجتماعية لغوية جدا ناجمة عن الاتصال اللغوي في سياق متعدد اللغات. هي محاولة لإلقاء بعض الضوء على ظاهرة التناوب اللغوي كما تمارس بشكل طبيعي في بيئة تعليمية و اجتماعية بإمتياز: داخل الفصول الدراسية. في هذا السياق التعليمي ، يمارس التناوب اللغوي بشكل متكرر في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية الدراسي الذي يمثل حياة اجتماعية حقيقية كما ادعى العديد من الباحثين. محاولة منه لإيجاد إجابات للدوافع وراء لجوء الطلاب إلى التناوب اللغوي وأنواعه التي يميلون إلى استخدامها ، اختار الباحث ، كونه أستاذا جامعيا للغة الإنجليزية ، منهجا كيفيا للغاية استخدم فيه وسيلة الملاحظة المنظمة في الفصل تلميها مقابلات مع مع المشاركين كأدوات بحثية. البيانات التي تم جمعها من مجموعة تتكون من تبادلات لغوية لعشرين طالب والمقابلة تظهر أن طلاب الإنجليزية يمارسون التناوب اللغوي لتلبية كل من الاحتياجات التواصلية والاجتماعية. في سياق الفصول الدراسية ، تم ممارسة التناوب بشكل متعمد بهدف التعرض للطلاب وأيضًا مؤشر على أن هؤلاء الطلاب يتحدثون لغتين بطلاقة. وفي الوقت نفسه ، استعمال التناوب داخل الجمل لم يكن في الواقع عمل متعمد ، بل يظهر كفاءة المشاركين كونهم متعددي اللغات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التناوب اللفظي؛ تعدد اللغات؛ قسم الانجليزية؛ اللسانيات الاجتماعية

1 Introduction:

It is agreed that Sociolinguistics is concerned with the study of language in relation to society. We believe that the area of Bordj Bou Arreridj is very interesting not only for sociolinguistic studies but also for socio-didactic investigations due to the diglossic, bilingual, and even cultural situations that prevail. Despite the large stuff of existing literature

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already available on code-switching, relatively little is known about how it is practised in an educational context as a communicative strategy in a multilingual community among proficient bilingual speakers represented, in our research, by the students of English at the University of Bordj Bou Arreridj. We feel this a real gap.

Statement of the problem:

Generally, these University EFL students have a great tendency to code-switch between two or three languages. In their EFL classes, they usually speak English, suddenly, they shift to Arabic, Berber or French, and, then, return back to English again. Sometimes, they begin their speech with a sentence and resort in the middle to the use of patterns that may be vocal, grammatical, pure or lexical of another language. Thus, they become users of two different or more linguistic systems. Absolutely, code-switching is a linguistic phenomenon which is widespread among Bordj Bou Arreridj University students of English, just like the ordinary people in the Algerian social reality. In addition to enriching the existing literature on the matter, this paper attempts to fill the gap in the existing literature already mentioned earlier.

Research Questions:

Considering what has been mentioned above, the objectives of the study attempt to answer the central questions that guide the research are thus raised as follows:

- a- Why do EFL students of English code-switch?
- b- What is the dominant type of code-switching they resort to in their in-class linguistic interactions?

2 Review of Literature:

This part of the paper tends to introduce a glance of geographical and historical of the area of Bordj Bou Arreridj. Then, it presents the linguistic situation of this area, where the research has been conducted. It also provides necessary definitions to the target issue referring to various scholars and researchers. Finally, the different studies on code-switching are to be debriefed with the aim to cover the maximum aspects of the concept in the investigation.

2.1 Bordj Bou Arreridj: A Glance of Geography and History

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The province of Bordj Bou Arreridj is geographically located in the north-east of Algeria. Part of the High Plains territory, it is bordered by the provinces of Setif in the East; Bouira in the West; Bejaia in the North; and M'sila in the South.

It was the Turks who named the area Bordj Bou Arreridj. The word *bordj*, tower in Arabic, refers to the military fort that was built by the Ottomans who settled the area. The name Bou Arreridj is, according to a legend, linked to the name to a Turkish military guard who was wearing a copper helmet with feathers over his head. Therefore, the name capital city of the area refers to the tower of the soldier with feathers on his head.

2.2 The Linguistic Situation of the Area:

Bordj Bou Arreridj is a true mosaic area not only with different landscapes but also with different cultures. From long time ago, the area hosted many people with different languages.

The Berbers were the first settlers of the area. According to Djillali (1965, p.61), their language is called Berber, also known as Tamazight. This language has had its own alphabet with a specific calligraphy. In relation to this, Djillali (1965) stated that the Berber language was used everywhere and that it was written in Tifinagh script. The Kabyle variety of Berber is highly spoken, but with the Arabic language too, in the areas neighbouring Bejaia and also the east of Bouira and the north of Setif. This includes mainly the districts of Djaafra, Mansoura and Medjana. Arabic language is highly spoken in the other districts, namely Ras El Oued, Bordj Ghedir, El Hamadia, Bordj Zemmoura, Ain Taghrout and Bir Kasd Ali. Due to historical reasons, the French language is also positioned with the linguistic scene of the area. Moreover, the influence of globalization, business and new communication technologies paved the way to the emergence of English to have its position, also, in the area. Bordj Bou Arreridj is really a multilingual area. The capital of the province, Bordj Bou Arreridj, is on its part a true melting pot where different cultures coexist, and different languages are used in harmony. The area is the birth place of many great writers in the history of Algeria in different languages: to name some but not all, El Bachir El Ibrahimi, Abdelhamid Ben Hadougua , Boudraa Brahim and Zebiri Yehia.

2.3 Definition of Code-switching

Despite the rich literature about code-switching, it seems there is a lack of consensus among scholars and researchers about what the term actually means. We should view the term code first. According to Romaine

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(1994, p. 121), not only does the term 'code' in a general sense refer to different languages, but also to varieties of the same language as well as styles within a language. He added that in multilingual societies, each language is reserved for a given situation; one, for example, is used at home, and another is used with friends and neighbours. So the term code stands for any language or any variety of any language. As for the term 'code-switching', the literature contains a lot of cites adopting its definition that goes in the sense in which Gumperz (1982, p.59) has defined it as 'the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems'.

Some researchers like Hudson (1996), perceive code-switching as a result of bilingualism. They confirm that a speaker switches from one language to another according to given situations. In that situation, bilingual speakers will choose the language that is understandable to the interlocutor. This change is called, according to Hudson, 'situational code-switching'. Another different definition is that of Spolsky (1998) who considers code-switching as the beginning of borrowing where there is an interference of words or phrases from a second language into sentences. For example, immigrants usually infer new words of the foreign language into their native language. However, Holmes (2001) maintains that code-switching can occur within speech events or social situations. For instance, in a meeting of two persons of the same community at a different code setting, there may be a switch of language in order to greet the person using the native language to show the speaker's identity, solidarity, and the relationship they share.

Some other linguists, however, like Myers-Scotton (1993) believe there is no difference between code-switching and code-mixing and regard this distinction as creating 'unnecessary confusion'. Myers-Scotton states that:

A number of researchers associated with Braj Kachru [.

], but also some others, prefer to label as 'code-mixing'

alternations which are intra-sentential, although it is not

entirely clear whether this applies to all intra-sentential

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code switching. While I grant that intra-sentential code switching puts different psycholinguistic 'stresses' on the language-production system from inter-sentential code switching. The two types of CS may have similar socio-psychological motivations. For this reason, I prefer code switching as a cover term; the two types can be differentiated by the labels 'inter-sentential' and 'intra-sentential' when structural constraints are considered.

(Myers-Scotton 1993)

From the last view of code-switching, we can infer that there is a typology that caused the different definitions of the term. Furthermore, the main difference between code-mixing and code-switching is unquestionably that code-switching has a social pragmatic consequence while code-mixing does not.

2.4 Why do People Code-switch?

According to Holmes (2001), the reasons behind code-switching in multilingual settings are considered complex. However, some other scholars state that speakers switching codes or languages tend to have balance mastery of the languages (Gass and Selinker, 2008; Ewert, 2010). Holmes (2001) further explains that the situation when a speaker of a second language uses a word from the L1 to cover the lack of knowledge of the appropriate word in the second language is called lexical borrowing. Regardless the difficulty of determining whether speakers switch code due to their lack of proficiency or specific contexts, codeswitching is categorized into intra-sentential (a code-switching in a lexical or phrasal levels) and inter-sentential (a code switching in a sentence level) (Rollin-lanziti and Brownlie, 2002 cited in Qing, 2010). Moreover, Holmes (2001) asserts that the functions of code-switching are showing group and ethnicity membership, talking about particular topic accurately, emphasizing

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affective functions, and drawing particular association of a code. Furthermore, the switch is the process or action of selecting or changing linguistic elements for the sake of effectiveness in communication (Ewert, 2010).

2.5 Types of Code-switching

In our research, we adopted the typology of Poplack (1980) who identified the following types: inter-sentential, intra-sentential and tag-switching.

a- Inter-Sentential

In this type, the language switch is done at sentence boundaries. It is identified in fluent bilingual speakers because major portions of the utterance must conform to the rules of both languages. An example from Puerto Rican bilingual Spanish/English speech is given by Poplack (1980): Sometimes I start a sentence in English *y termino in Espanol*. 'Sometimes I start a sentence in English and finish it in Spanish.' Note that the second sequence of the utterance can come first. This would mean that if the interaction of the individual is divided into sentences, one sentence will be in one code, and the other sentence will be in another code.

b- Intra-sentential

The shift is done in the middle of a sentence, with no interruptions, or pauses to indicate a shift. That is, the speaker switches from one language to another within the same sentence or clause. The speaker is usually unaware of the shift. Different types of switches occur within the clause level and within the word level.

c- Extra-sentential or tag switching

This type involves the insertion of a tag in one language into an utterance which is in another language. Examples of tags in English are: *you know, I mean*, etc. Since tags are subject to minimal syntactic restrictions, they may be easily inserted at a number of points in a monolingual utterance without violating syntactic rules.

3 Method

3.1 Research design

This research aims at investigating the code-switching as practised by L2 EFL students of English at the University of Bordj Bou Arreridj. This research belongs to qualitative research employing case study method since

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it aims at revealing a specific phenomenon experienced by a subject in a specific context with the intervention of the researcher in eliciting data (Nunan, 1992).

As our research targets a specific population, a case study would suit our objectives. Our choice was mainly influenced by many researchers who adopted such a method for their investigations. Moreover, the researcher is integrally involved in the case to highlight specific events that are relevant to that case. That is why a brief definition of a case study would be ‘the study of an instance in action’ (Adelman et al., cited in Cohen et al., 2000, p.181). Case studies generally focus on individual actors or groups of actors, and seeks to understand their perceptions of events.

3.2 The participants and the research site

The participants in our research were a group of Second Year students of English at the University of Bordj Bou Arreridj. The selection of participants is dictated by the nature of our investigation taking place in the ELT classroom. When it comes to classroom research, also called socio-didactic research, the participants choice is categorised as purposive sampling since the participants are considered able to give the necessary data (Bailey, 2007; Malik & Hamied, 2014). Our participants are aged between 19 and 21. There are 13 females and 7 males. As for the site of the research, it is the ordinary Grammar Module session classroom that hosted the investigation.

3.3 Data collection

To collect data, we resorted to employ two highly qualitative research tools. First, given that our study is an in-classroom research, we relied on using a participant observation tool. In similar studies, Cohen et al. (2000) maintain that the researcher stays with the participants for a substantial period of time to reduce reactivity effects, recording what is happening, whilst taking a role in that situation. They add that in schools, this might be taking on some particular activities, sharing supervisions, participating in school life, recording impressions, conversations, observations, comments, etc. Here are some advantages of using such a tool as identified by Cohen et al.

- The students are familiar with the teacher; therefore they feel more at ease.
- It can be done in lesson time as it occurs during the lesson time.
- It can follow up problems immediately when they arise and get initial information.

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- First-hand information can be studied conveniently in the teacher's own time.

The second research tool is a semi-structured interview with two students. The aim is to get more information and also to assess the recorded data of the observation, especially in terms of using the Berber language. Another advantage of interviews is that they focus on a specific aspect of teaching or classroom life in detail. They also provide general diagnostic information through teacher-student classroom discussion

3.4 Data

The collected data are divided into two main parts. First, to reveal the students' switches of code in the classroom during the Grammar lesson activities and the interview are listed. The utterances in classroom observation are analysed in order to categorise the code-switching utterances in the educational context. Whereas utterances in the interview are also analysed. The utterances indicating the practice of codes-witching are marked. The types of code-switching categorisation are based on Rollin-lantizi and Brownlie (2002, cited in Qing, 2010) categorising code-switching into intra-sentential and inter-sentential. Second, the possible reasons behind the practice of code-switching in the ELT classroom are listed and analysed. The analysis is based on theories suggested by some scholars (Poplack, 1980); Gass and Selinker, 2008; and Ewert, 2010).

4 Findings and Discussion

4.1- Observation

The table below contains the instances of code-switching collected during the observation phase. The languages involved

Code switching examples with translation	Languages involved	Typology
what should we do <i>hnaya?</i> <i>we</i>	<i>English,</i> <i>Algerian</i> <i>Arabic</i>	Inter-Sentential
Eyooh! What should we do Dhagui ! tag <i>/ðegi:/ (now)</i>	<i>English,</i> <i>Kabylia</i>	Tag Inter-Sentential
A: you know I ... Oufhimghara achi dena ! you have to aydesfahmedh. <i>/ʊfhɪŋgæræ æʃɪ dənæ/ (I didn't understand, what did she say)...</i> <i>/eɪdefəhməð/ (explain to me)</i>	<i>English,</i> <i>Kabylia</i>	Inter-Sentential

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B: don't worry... Thoura akidesfahmagh. /θʊræ ækɪdsfəhmæð/ (I shall explain to you)		intra-Sentential
Attention! "it's" تكون "it is" ولا "it has" Pay attention! "it's" can be it is or it has	<i>French, English, Algerian Arabic</i>	Inter-Sentential
In order to distinguish between past simple and present perfect... <i>On doit trouver un indicateur de temps.</i> <i>We have to find a time marker</i>	<i>English, French</i>	Inter-Sentential

Table 1 Code-switching examples produced by the participants in these linguistic interactions are provided together with the translation of Arabic and Berber words. The third column is devoted to the typology of code-switching expressed by the participants.

When a student whose mother tongue is Arabic doesn't understand or gets confused of how to do the task. He/she would unconsciously produce an utterance like the first one in the table above. (what should we do hnaya!) However, when the group consists of students whose mother tongue is kabilyan, they would feel comfortable to switch to the Berber language just like in the second example,(Eyooh! What should we do Dhagui ! /ðegi:/) In another group consisting of multilingual students, a Berber speaking student would code-switch to ask if he/she does not understand something by addressing another Berber speaking classmate, excluding the others, in order to avoid embarrassment. This may also relate to a kind of showing one's identity and asking for solidarity. Some students are likely to code-switch to their mother tongues when forgetting a word or ignoring how to say it in English in order to avoid a break or a gap that would pervade their speech. This could refer to borrowing. But most of the time, students would feel comfortable about code-switching as long as they can convey their messages. Students may also code-switch in order to explain or give clarification to each other.

Some other students who have a good level in French would switch to it in order to express themselves better when having a group work activity. Here is an example: "In order to distinguish between past simple and present perfect... *On doit trouver un indicateur de temps.*"

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As can be seen on the table above, ELT students of English do code-switch using the languages that can help them monitor any potential communication. The data yielded from the observation notes show that in the classroom context, inter-sentential code-switching is practised deliberately to serve as exposures for students and also an indicator that these students are fluent bilingual speakers. Meanwhile, intra-sentential code-switching is not really a deliberate action, but rather a force of habit from the part of the participants as multilingual speakers.

4.2 The interview

As mentioned earlier, the semi-structured interviews tend to find an answer to the second research question. The data collected from our participants are conforming to what we have reviewed in the literature in relation to code-switching. The main reasons behind code-switching range from the linguistic need due to ignorance or low proficiency of English to a kind of identity showing, as Holmes mentioned in our literature review. The new motive our research may add to the previous ones is the one expressed by one of the participants, "To avoid embarrassment."

4.3 Limitations of the study

Our study employs only a qualitative data collection method. Probably, the use of quantitative data related to the topic may improve the results gained by the observation and the interviews. The only reason for excluding a real triangulation was the time constraints as the main focus of the session is teaching, not doing research. Furthermore, the students' schedule does not offer time slots to be involved in another type of data collection. Another limitation is related to the number of participants in our research. A larger number of informants would yield more representing findings.

4.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings of the study, here are some suggestions for further research:

- Conduct similar research involving teachers in the study.
- Investigate the issue from other perspectives, such as the impact of using code-switching on ELT classes.
- Gender and code-switching: who resort to code-switching more or less among males and females.

Conclusion

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Usually, code-switching between two or three languages is a common practice among EFL university students. The current investigation is an attempt to detect the motives behind such a practice. It also tries to identify the dominant type of code-switching the L2 students of English at the University of Bordj Bou Arreridj resort to in their in-class linguistic interactions.

The study implements a highly qualitative research method relying on two research tools. The in-class observation involved the participation of twenty students belonging to the same group. The second research tool includes semi-structured interviews with two students.

The findings of the investigation show that the L2 students of English practice code-switching in the classroom context. In that, they practice code-switching more in the form of inter-sentential code-switching, while in the non-classroom context, especially in the interview, they practise code-switching in the form of intra-sentential code-switching. Moreover, the findings reveal that the participants practise code-switching in order to help them learn English effectively. It is also used to seek solidarity from co-users of the same language.

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