Functions and Reasons for Code Switching to Arabic among EFL Students. (English Department, ENSC)

Kelkoula Nachoua

University: frère Mentouri, Constantine.

Supervisor: Dr Djileb Farida

Abstract

Code switching is a whispered phenomenon that results from languages in contact and in which the juxtaposition of these languages is intentional and purposeful. Generally speaking, code switching refers to the alternate use of more than two languages by speakers in a discourse and it concerns only bilingual and multilingual societies. The phenomenon of code switching has undoubtedly attracted the attention of many writers, linguists and researchers in the field and various studies have been made to investigate and scrutinize the occurrence, the reasons and the functions of code switching. This work aims at scrutinizing the reasons for code switching to Arabic in ELT classes as perceived by students and data is analyzed based on an integration of Appel and Muysken's (2006) six functions of code switching and Malik's (1994) ten reasons for code-switching. The study is conducted at the department of English, ENSC (école nationale supérieure) in Constantine and it involves 50 speaking students taken at random from the first, second, third, fourth and fifth years. Finding and results of this study showed that code switching occurs in EFL classes mainly to serve referential, expressive, directive and poetic functions.

Key terms: code- switching, EFL classes, ENSC students, functions for code- switching, reasons for code switching.

الملخص

إن تحويل الشفرات هو ظاهرة تنتج من اللغات التي تتفاعل فيما بينها و التي تتماشي مع هده اللغات بشكل متعمد و هادف. بصفة عامة يشير تحويل الشفرة إلي الاستخدام البديل لأكثر من لغتين من قبل المتحدثين في الخطاب و هو يتعلق فقط بالمجتمعات ثنائية اللغة ومتعددة اللغات و لا شك في أن ظاهرة تحويل الشفرات قد جدبت انتباه العديد من الكتاب ولغويين والباحثين في هدا المجال كما أجريت دراسات عديدة للفحص و التدقيق في حدوث هده الظاهرة و أسبابها ووظائفها. تهدف هده الورقة البحثية إلى البحث و التمحيص في مبادئ تحويل الشفرات إلي العربية في أقسام تعليم اللغة الانجليزية كما يراها الطلاب. ويستند تحليل المعطيات على دمج للوظائف الستة لتحويل الشفرة لابل و مويسكن (2006) والأسباب العشرة لتحويل الشفرة لمالك (1994).) . يتم إجراء الدراسة في قسم اللغة الانجليزية بالمدرسة العليا للأساتذة في قسنطينة و يشمل 50 طالبا متحدثا آخذو بشكل عشوائي من السنوات الأولى الثانية الثالثة الرابعة و الخامسة. اطهرت نتائج هده الدراسة أن تحويل الشفرة يحدث في صفوف تعليم اللغة الانجليزية بشكل أساسي لخدمة الوظائف المرجعية و التعبيرية و التوجيهية .

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحويل الشفرة ، وظائف تحويل الشفرة، أسباب تحويل الشفرة.

1. Introduction

Code switching becomes a common practice among all bilingual and multilingual societies all over the world in that in each country we may find at least two languages or varieties of language spoken. The phenomenon of code switching has been a subject of many writers, linguists and researchers such as Myers –Scotton (1991); Poplack (1980); Milroy and Muysken (1995) and so many others. In fact various studies have been made to investigate and scrutinize the occurrence, the reasons and the functions of code switching and various theories have been put forth about what code switching really is and what motivates bilingual or multilinguals speakers to code switch.

Algeria, like any other Arab countries is characterized by the existence of different sociolinguistics phenomenon because of the distinct languages and the various varieties that are spoken and used by Algerians and the contact between them. Code switching is one of the features that is well observed and highly used among Algerians compared to other Arab speakers in that if one stranger comes to Algeria and notices what an Algerian repertoire could consist of, he or she would be amazed of the richness and the linguistic diversity in this country. In fact, many languages and varieties are dominant in Algeria; this co existence of genetically unrelated languages makes Algeria a bilingual and even multilingual community.

2. Literature Review

In sociolinguistics studies, the term "code switching "is a linguistic conversational phenomenon which generally refers to the alternation of two different languages or varieties within the same sentence or discourse. In fact, code switching is a natural process that occurs among bilingual or multilingual speakers who often tend to switch between their languages while conversing for special purposes. Many linguists and sociolinguists talked about this concept and each one examined it from various angles and from his or her own perspective; yet there is no clear and definite definition of what code switching actually is and where does it occur because the term is of a great ambiguity. Jacobson (1990, p.1) writes about this discrepancy as follow:

> The notion of alternation between varieties is not conceived of in a homogenous way, but, rather, that different investigators examine the phenomenon in ways that elude the possibility of providing a definition of code switching that all will subscribe to.

Haugen (1956) was the first to use the term "code switching" referring it to the alternation and interference between two or more languages by bilingual speakers and Crystal (1987, p.363) points out that 'as the definition of 'language' is tenuous at best, perhaps it is better to say switching between varieties in addition to switching between languages'' So, we understand that switching can

occur not only between languages but also dialects or varieties of the same language. In the same line of thought, Milroy and Muysken (1995, p.7) define code switching as "the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation." and they perceive code switching as "a cover term that includes different forms of bilingual behavior". However, Bentahila and Davies (1983) give a more comprehensive definition of code switching. They write:

> We shall henceforth use the term code –switching to refer to the use of two languages within a single conversation, exchange or utterance. The result is an utterance or interaction of which some parts are clearly in one of the bilingual's languages and other parts in the other language. (315)

Furthermore, Gumperz (1982, p.59) defines code switching as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems". In fact, Gumperz studied code switching relating it to social situations in which the focus was on the communicative functions of the codes that are being used in such bilingual situations. He claims that each code has a certain communicative function in a society and that these codes are sustained separate by the members of the community giving an illustration of the two dialects (Bokmal and Ranamal) in Norway, where the speakers of this Hemnesberget village think themselves are code switching, while, in reality, they were in a case of dialect continuum of the same language.

Hymes 1968 on the other hand describe this phenomenon as a form of incompetence in one language. In fact, sometimes bilingual or multilingual speakers tend to shift from one language or from one code to another when they feel unable to find a right word or a particular expression to convey what they are trying to say or to fully express themselves. In this sense Hymes says that code switching is "used as a strategy of communication to compensate his lack of competence by using sometimes one language, sometimes the other to maximize the efficiency of the communications. (p. 200).

Different definitions have been given to code switching and many writers and linguists agree that the term is still ambiguous but we can clearly observe from the different views that code switching refers to the process of shifting between two languages or dialects by bilingual or multilingual speakers in the same conversation or within the same speech (Garden, 2009).

Many researchers and analysts have been asking questions such as: why does the pattern of switching occur, what are the functions of code switching in bilingual discourse and what is the reason behind it? In fact, these researchers tried several times to find at least one single motivator behind code-switching but the thing is sometimes there is no motivator at all. Thus, it is important to know that bilinguals may code switch between languages without being aware of the fact that they are doing so. In this sense, Bullock and Toribio 2010 say:

> …it merits pointing out that not all language alternations in bilingual speech do signal a particular communicative intent or purpose: for many bilinguals, code-switching merely represents another way of speaking; that is, some bilinguals' code-switch simply because they can and often times may not be aware that they have done so. (p. 11)

Labov furthermore confirm that code switching could be used with no particular motivation behind it and he gives the example of the black boy who describes a game of Skelly, switching between two distinct codes using Black English Vernacular and Standard English. Labov (1971, p.462) finds the following:

(a) Switching sites are often difficult to limit, since many items are often shared by systems, the vernacular and the standard.

(b) The speaker switches between both systems at least 16 times without an apparent motivation in the same stretch of discourse.

Moreover, Appel and Mysken (2006) used Jakobson's (1960) and Halliday's (1964) concept of functional specialization to come up with six main functions of code switching:

1. The referential function: code switching occurs because of the lack of knowledge or register of one language or lack of facility in that language. Therefore, bilingual speakers shift between languages when they do not have the appropriate word in one language or when they do not find the suitable concept to convey the message because sometimes there are no similar words in languages.

2. Directive function: it is a participant- related function and its goal is to include or exclude someone from a conversation by using a familiar or unfamiliar language as a sign to that person.

3. Expressive function: in this case, speakers tend to use more than one language in a conversation in order to express their "mixed identity" as stated by Poplack (1980). Code switching in this regard is made for social reasons. People code switch to create a sense of belonging, to express personal emotions such as anger, sadness and to express opinion and attitudes. In his study of Chinese/ English code switching in Taiwan, Chen (1996) states that :

   No matter what role-relationship is involved, the people in my study all use code switching to perform the expressive function of emotional release, particularly for tension relief or the unburdening of pent-up feeling. They insert English swear words, English words that are Taboo in Chinese in that context, and English words of affection (e.g. love, flattering), in Chinese-dominant interactions in order to express emotional passion….and to relieve tension in other situations characterized by anger, fear, surprise and frustration. English is used as a neutral code in these situations to express emotions and true feelings while avoiding the negative connotations of those words or phrases in Chinese. The use of English in Chinese- based interactions for these functions is due to the fact that Chinese social values stress modesty in behavior. (p.271)

4. Phatic function: also known as the metaphorical function, in which code switching is used in order to demonstrate or highlight a change of the tone or to focus on important parts in the conversation.

5. Metalinguistic function: it involves speakers making direct or indirect comments on another language in order to impress and attract the attention of other participants as having linguistic skills.

6. Poetic function: it involves switched words, puns and jokes in order to amuse or to entertain the speakers. People in such a case code switch to quote something said by others or to crack jokes.

Many researchers such as Beebe (1981), Gal (1978), Milroy (1987), claim that the primary function of code switching is to create a linguistic solidarity and to build an identity among members of a bilingual community. Holmes (1992, p.275) gives the following example of two speakers who code switch from English to Maori during a conversation and trough which their language shift reflects their ethnic identity and builds a strong solidarity among them. In the following conversation, the Maori is in Italic and is underlined; however the translation is in bold.

Sarah: I think everyone's here except Mere.

John: she said she might be a bit late but actually I think that's her arriving now.

Sarah: You are right. *Kia ora Mere. Haere mai. Kei te pehea koe?*

(Hi Mere. Come in. How are you?)

Mere**:** *Kia ora hoa. Kei te pai.* Have you started yet?

(Hello my friend. Iam Fine)

There are many lists of functions that have been provided by other researchers and many studies have followed Gumperz (1982) and proposed some similar taxonomy of functions. In this sense, Bailey (2002, p.77) points out that "the ease with such categories can be created- and discrepancies between the code switching taxonomies at which researchers have arrived –hint at the

epistemological problems of such taxonomies." Thus, it is pretty clear that code switching may serve any of the functions proposed above.

Malik (1994), like other researchers such as: Gumperz (1982) and Karen Kow (2003) came up with ten reasons of code switching when he studied the situation of Indian speakers code switching. He suggested the following list:

1. Lack of facility: speakers code switch when some concepts or appropriate expressions in one variety are not available in the other variety.

2. Lack of registral competence: Speakers code switch because they are not equally competent in the two languages.

3. Mood of the speaker: When the speakers are not in a good state of mind. i.e., when they are tired, anxious, angry or nervous; code switching seems to take place even if the intended words are present in both languages.

4. To emphasize a point: code switching is used as a means of adding more force to the statement.

5. Habitual expressions: code switching occurs mainly in fixed phrases like: greetings, commands, requests, invitations, expressions of gratitude and discourse markers.

6. Semantic significance: code switching is a tool for conveying important and meaningful linguistic and social information.

7. To show identity with a group: code switching is used to signify shared values and experiences by people belonging to the same culture.

8. To address different audience: code switching takes place when speakers tend to address people who have different linguistic background.

9. Pragmatic reasons: code switching may emphasize varying degrees of speaker's involvement.

10. To attract attention: code switching is used to attract the attention of the audience through media and advertisements.

3. Methodology

The main raison behind this study is to investigate the functions and reasons of code switching at the Department of English ENSC (école national supérieure) in Constantine. Appel and Muysken's (2006) six functions of code-switching and Malik's (1994) ten reasons for code- switching were used as a fundamental framework. The sample refers to the year 2018. Here 50 students altogether from different levels (first, second, third, fourth and fifth years) are chosen to answer a questionnaire which consists of 20 items. Out of the 50 participants, 12 of them are male while the remaining are 38 female students and their ages range from 18 to 23 years. These participants are students who study 4 or 5 consecutive years to be either middle school or high school teachers. The questionnaire is a closed-item questionnaire, used to gather information on opinions, attitudes and perceptions on the reasons why students code switch to Arabic in classrooms.

4. Results and Findings

The Interpretation of the Students' Questionnaire

Adopting Appel and Muysken's (2006) framework of functions of code switching, it is not surprisingly that most of the instance of code switching demonstrated a dominant referential function. The high majority of students agreed that they code switch to Arabic in classes when they cannot find the appropriate word in one language because sometimes there are no similar words in languages or to discuss certain topics which can be more appropriate to discuss in the mother tongue. These findings corroborate with the finding of Greggio and Gil (2007) who came up with the same results that code switching is used to provide equivalent meaning in L1, to fill a linguistic gap and thus makes learning more easily.

The second dominant function is the expressive one and the reason why students code switch to Arabic is to express personal emotions such as anger,

sadness, frustration, and they use swear words, or words of affection such as love and flattery to express their opinion and attitudes. In addition to that students confirm that they restore to code switching in order to express a sense of belonging or solidarity to their teachers or peers. Finding of Christine (2007) confirm that the incorporation of mother tongue in classes helps students feel more relaxed and less anxious.

The third function that resulted in the most occurrences of code-switching is the directive function. Many students stressed resorting to code switching for directive functions under different reasons such as discussing personal issues, attracting people's attention and persuading others. Findings of the previous literature in Malik (1994) and Flyman- Mattson and Burenhult (1999) shows that code switching has an impact on drawing the attention of others; this in fact goes in line with findings of the present study.

The forth function in number of incidence is the poetic. 16% of students confirmed switching for poetic functions like cracking jokes and making the lessons more enjoyable. However, a few instances of Metalinguistic functions are perceived and there is no instance of the phatic function.

Functions of code- switching	Percentage %
Referential function	34.31%
Expressive function	24.50%
Metalinguistic function	4.9%
Directive function	19.6%
Phatic function	00%
Poetic function	16.66%
Total	**100%**

Table 1: Percentage of code switching to Arabic based on Appel and Muysken's six functions of code switching.

Adopting Malik's (2004) ten reasons of code switching, the lack of facility and the lack of registral competence are the two top main reasons why students

code switch in Arabic in classes. Students agreed on the fact that sometimes certain concepts are available in only one language and they do not have equivalent meanings in the other language. Mood of speaker is the second reason engaging in code switching for respondents selected for the study. In fact, these students confirmed that they code switch in classes because they feel the necessity to express personal emotions such as anger, sadness, and happiness and because they feel more comfortable in using more than one language when speaking.

The next two reasons of students' code switching to Arabic are for habitual expression and to show identity with a group where a sense of belonging is created. Some students who answered the questionnaire acknowledged that they switch code in classes to address different audience and few participants make use of code switching to Arabic during the lessons to amplify and emphasize a point.

However, the least reason of importance according to students is to attract the attention. The remaining two categories which are semantic significance and pragmatic reasons have not accounted for any answer.

Reasons of code switching	Percentage %
Lack of facility	18.63%
Lack of registral competence	18.63%
Habitual expression	12.42%
To amplify and emphasize a point	7.45%
Mood of the speaker	15.52%
To show identity with a group	12.42%
To address different audience	9.31%
Semantic significance	00%
Pragmatic reasons	00%
To attract attention	5.58%
Total	**100%**

Table 2: Reasons of code- switching based on Malik's (1994) framework.

5. Conclusion

In this study, the phenomenon of code-switching to Arabic in English classes at ENSC was analyzed using a functional approach. The functions and reasons for code-switching were identified and classified based on a framework adapted from Appel and Muysken (2006) and Malik (1994) functions and reasons of code switching.

Finding suggested that out of six functions proposed by Appel and Muysken (2006), five functions including referential, expressive, directive, poetic and Metalinguistic were identified as the most common functions of code-switching perceived by students at ENSC. Moreover, for Malik's (1994) ten reasons for code switching, eight of the reasons which are lack of facility, lack of registral competence, mood of the speaker, habitual expressions, to identify with a group, to address different audience, to amplify and emphasize a point and to attract attention were singled out as the most reasons of why ENSC students switch code to their L1 during lessons and in their classes.

Results of this study compared with some previous investigations on functions and reasons of code switching gives sufficient grounds to conclude that code switching in language classes is used purposefully by many students and most of the time; this means that code switching is not a barrier that it should be forbidden and not allowed in classes, rather it is a useful strategy and a beneficial tool for students' comprehension because sometimes some concepts and ideas are much more easily rendered in one language than another. Zentella (1981) said that "it seems premature to ban code switching from the classroom when we do not know what we are banning along with it ", "nor is it helpful to say it should be incorporated into the classroom in a mechanistic way "(p.130). This means that code switching should be done in moderation and students should be aware and clear about when code switching is allowed and when it is not, otherwise, it would be of a big harm if incorporating it in classes is applicable all the times. So, the

teachers' role is to prevent students from its long term use in classroom since it distracts and leads to a blockage and deficiency in learning a language.

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