The Functions of Code Switching in ESL Classroom Discourse

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Abstract
This study objective to investigate the discourse functions of code-switching used by the teachers in ESL classrooms in a Pakistani university. Another aim of this study was to find out the forms of code-switching used by the teachers and functions of these code-switching usages at diploma level. In the light of these aims, four diploma classes were observed and audio recorded. The data obtained from these recordings were transcribed using the content analysis method and the following results have been obtained: 1) teachers use code-switching in the classes for educational and social reasons; 2) the most frequent form of code-switching was observed to be used discourse markers.
Keywords: Function of Code-switching, Classroom discourse

1 Introduction

Language is a unique feature of human beings that plays central role in all aspects of human activity, interaction and knowledge. One of the two cardinal functions of language; is used for social interaction and academic purposes. How languages are different, how language varies over time and between different societies, how language is learn and how language is used for human communication, all these facets of language fall into the domain of linguistics (Milroy & Muysken 1995).

Pakistan is a multilingual country that has many regional languages along with Urdu as a national language but English is used as parallel of Urdu and has been taken the status of second language. It is not only spoken at homes, markets, offices but our educational system is also under the influence of this language. Most of the schools have adapted it in curriculum construction and medium of instruction because English has been made a symbol of status and basic need of the people, which is compelled force to introduce many optional language courses to fulfil these necessities which has been made a basic need of our society. Many colleges and universities are offering these courses like certificate, diploma, advance diploma, ELP (eloquent leadership propriety), language improvement program etc (Chaudron 1988).

The review of literature showed that most of the countries are bilingual and multilingual. People generally choose a specific code during their speech and they may also switch from one code to another or some time mix them. This process is called code-switching (Wei, 2000). One of the earliest definitions of code-switching was provided by Stern (1992) description of bilingualism as "the practice of alternately using two languages. According to Gumperz (1982), code switching is: "as the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub- systems"(p.59). Hymes (1977, p.103) defines code-switching as " the alternate use of two or more languages, varieties of a language, or even speech styles" and as "the alternate use of two or more languages in the same utterance or conversation"(Grosjean 1982: 145). Code-switching defined by Myers-Scotton (2006: 157) as the use of two or more languages in the same conversation without a noticeable phonological assimilation from one variety to another.

1.1 Research Questions
1. What forms of code switching are used in an ESL classroom?
2. What functions do these occurrences of code-switching serve in the classroom?

1.2 Research Design
The qualitative method was employed in order to conduct the present study.

1.2.1 Sample
In order to answer the research questions given above case study research was employed in this study. The data were taken from four diploma classes in the department of Functional English at National University of Modern Languages Lahore Campus. Four 20 minutes lessons were audio recorded for the analysis. Totally, there were four whole lesson hours of data to be transcribed.

1.2.2 Data Collection
The data collection was take place at the department of Functional English Courses at National University of

Modern Languages. The aim of this department to provide the students whose level of English is below proficiency level with basic language skills so that they can pursue their undergraduate studies without any major difficulties. To achieve this aim, the department runs one-semester intensive program placing emphasis on reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Students are placed in two groups according to their gender and have 15 class hours per week. The rationale behind choosing this context is because the students of Functional English courses consist of freshman contenders of various departments and faculties which provide the research setting with an equal distribution of a varied group.

1.2.3 Data Analysis

The recorded data analyzed by using the methods of content analysis.

1.3 Results

The study is a qualitative one in that it does not aim at giving a numerical data. The collected data through audio recording were transcribed and there will be only be some general remarks of the frequency of the code switching. The basic reason of using qualitative approach is that it is difficult to count the total occurrences of code switching and draw line between them.

The present study identifies illustrations of code switching and analyze them what functions they serve. The method of analysis is discourse analysis. In the classroom research discourse analysis is that analysis which concern with spoken language as used by the teacher and the students (Allwrite and Bailey.1991). Data is collected by audio or video recording and transcribed it furthermore the issues of power or roles in my analysis can be introduced when necessary. The analysis will be started from the observation what goes on in the classrooms in term of interaction and when Urdu and English used. This will be helpful to identifying instances of code switching which will be analyzed using Poplack's (1980) categories of the type of code switching. The data is recorded through audio recorder. Each recorded session is approximately 20 minutes which is considered one lesson hour. The total data transcribed come from four lesson hours; four diploma classes, adding up to totally around 80 minutes of analyzed data. The language is used in delivering lectures was English with frequent switches to Urdu at different levels especially when they solving exercises given by the teachers. Code switching is used as exemplified and explained in the following section as a mode of communication to contribute to mutual understanding or to signal the extant of understanding and/or misunderstanding.

There are three different types of code switching intra-sentential code switching, inter-sentential code switching and tag switching (Poplack 1980). Inter-sentential code switching occurs between sentences, clauses, or turns. In the data this type of code switching is used in both certificate level and diploma level when, for example, translating or explaining something (grammar, exercise etc.). Teachers and the students both use inter-sentential code switching; furthermore, this type of code switching is used quite a lot in both classes. Code switching occurs within a sentence is called intra- sentential. According to Poplack (1980), it requires a lot of integration and therefore it is only used by the most fluent bilinguals. In the data this type of code switching occurs, for instance, when doing or checking exercises and teaching grammar and it is very common in those situations. Usually in those situations the base language is Urdu but the exercise or grammar examples are in English. I would treat those examples as intra-sentential code switching since the switching takes place within a sentence.

1.4 Discussion

The study examined the forms and functions of code switching in an ESL classroom from the perspectives of both teachers and pupils. In the light of this purpose four diploma level classes were observed and lessons were recorded using a tape recorder. In total around 80 minutes of classroom interaction was recorded and the recorded data were transcribed and analyzed.

The findings of the study suggested that teachers and pupils both use code switching for varying purposes and variety of forms. The most frequent use of to be used by the teachers was observed to be the insertion of Urdu discourse markers. These discourse markers serve various purposes for the teachers as well as students. Unlike studies investigating bilingual discourse markers in code switched utterances in different languages (Hlavac, 2006), discourse markers used in the present study were Urdu.

When the analyzed discourse functions of code switched teachers' utterances were investigated, it is observed that code switching for a variety purposes in various form were used. The most outstanding result that can be drawn from the data of teachers' use of code switching is that while English is naturally used in instances during content delivery but they had a tendency to switch to Urdu when they were managing the overall discipline in the classroom, to make them understand, to give examples, to create humours and tern the mood of the class etc. this would indicate that English is the mode of instruction over half of the time during lessons teachers use English in activities, but Urdu is employed to help facilitate the communication. To conclude, Urdu and English go side by side in ESL classrooms in Pakistan, both languages seem to have their own functions in the classroom though some functions overlap.

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