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CODE-SWITCHING IN ELT CLASSROOMS IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

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Abstract
The use of the mother tongue also known as L1 as a needed and important constituent in the L2 classroom has been discussed amongst teachers of English as a foreign/second language for a long time. Therefore, the present study wants to answer the following research question: What are the circumstances ELT teachers and students switch between English and Albanian, with the goal to better understand teachers' and students' language choice regarding code switching in ELT classrooms. In order to reach the goal, a sample of 15 interviews conducted with primary, secondary, and higher education ELF teachers and of 15 interviews carried out with ELT high schools and university students, from the Republic of Kosovo is determined. The interviews are transcribed and then coded and the analysis rests upon the interpretative-inductive approach. The results of this study show that the majority of the EFL teachers use their mother tongue to either explain their ideas clearly, give instructions, manage the classroom, or understand instructions and ideas appropriately in English, etc. Teachers always switch to their mother tongue (L1) when using EFL (L2) and in very rare cases the opposite. The research results also display that EFL learners use code switching to express themselves better, to explain ideas, to communicate with each other, and to increase comprehension such as in cases when they ask their professors or their colleagues questions, but there are cases worth mentioning when professors and learners use it without even realizing it. This research will help teachers and students have a better understanding of the role of code-switching in ELT classes, and will make them more aware of this very common phenomenon.

Keywords: *English language, code-switching, teaching and learning L2, mother tongue.*

1. Introduction

English language, as a truly global lingua franca, as the language most widely spoken throughout the world, is the main foreign language taught in our education system and it is considered a very important subject in our curriculums. If we want to meet the needs of students when it comes to their communicative language skills, it is necessary to improve the quality of ELT by improving the methods and techniques that EFL teachers use. The use of L1 (also known as the native language or mother tongue) in the classroom is considered to be an issue for English as a foreign language teachers. As a phenomenon, code switching can be observed especially in multilingual and bilingual situations inside and outside of the classroom environments. People who speak or are fluent in more than one language usually mix them when using. We have different cases with Albanian Diaspora, who mix Albanian and German, Albanian and French, but we also have cases of multilingual people in Kosovo who incorporate L2 (English in most of the cases) when speaking in their L1, many times without even realizing that they are switching codes. Code switching is used by multilingual people to contextualize conversations in their communications and it is also a widespread phenomenon when it comes

to language teaching, specifically in multilingual classrooms, such as the primary, secondary and higher education institutions in Kosovo. CS is always seen in EFL classes. As Baker (2006) imply, when EFL students cannot come up with the right word to express their thoughts and ideas, they tend to use words from L1 in order to complete their thoughts. Thus, according to him, seen from a sociolinguistics perspective code-switching performs a variety of functions, one of which is to substitute a word in place of an unknown word in the target language.

This research answers the question: What are the circumstances ELT teachers and students switch between English and Albanian, with the goal to better understand teachers' and students' language choice regarding code switching in an ELT classrooms. A sample of 15 interviews conducted with primary, secondary, and higher education ELF teachers and of 15 interviews carried out with ELT high schools and university students, from the Republic of Kosovo is determined. The interviews are transcribed and coded and the analysis rests upon the interpretative-inductive approach. Code-switching is very common in our educational institutions, and hopefully this research will contribute to a better understanding of language choice in code-switching by teachers and students.

2. Broader research context

Code-switching has been defined as the practice of moving back and forth between two languages or between two dialects or registers of the same language at one time (Nordquist, 2019). It is also known as style-shifting and code-mixing. Different linguists study it to understand when individuals do it, such as when bilingual or multilingual speakers change languages from one to the other, whereas sociologists study it to understand why people do it, such as how it connects to their membership in a group or in the context of the conversation (whether it is professional or casual), etc. According to Zentella (1985), code-switching performs several functions. First, code-switching may be used to disguise fluency or memory issues in a second language. Second, code-switching is used to transition between informal (L1) and formal context (L2). Third, code-switching is used to exercise control, especially by parents with their children e vice versa. Fourth, code-switching is used to connect people with each other in different social situations (e.g., specifying one's ethnicity). Johnson (2000 in Gudykunst, 2004) states that code-switching also "functions to announce specific identities, create certain meanings, and facilitate particular interpersonal relationships."

Seen from a sociolinguistics perspective code-switching performs a variety of functions such as to highlight a specific point, to substitute a word in place of an unknown word in the target language, to express a concept that has no equivalent in the culture of the other language, to reinforce a request, to clarify a point, to express identity and communicate friendship, to ease tension and inject humor into a conversation, and to introduce certain topics (Baker, 2006).

In some cases, code-switching is used to conceal fluency in L2. In other cases, it is used by students to switch from formal situations to informal situations. There are many cases where code-switching is used to demonstrate power and authority even though this mainly happens in family situations. Code switching is also used to relate to other speakers on different social or educational occasions. Code-switching is a technique of adapting language for the purpose of individual intentions, such as creating relations among members of a multilingual community, and linking gaps with speakers who have the same cultural identity.

As Cook (2001) suggests "Teachers should be clear in their minds that they are usually teaching people how to use two languages, not how to use one in isolation. Rather, the aim is people who can stand between two viewpoints and between two cultures, a multi-competent speaker who can do more than any monolingual." Code-switching has been opposed for different reasons. First, using the mother tongue in the classroom is considered a factor that delays language acquisition and opposes the natural method of people learning languages. EFL learners could become reliant on teachers' code-switching and this may result in a lack of L2

exposure which makes it hard for them to guess or interfere with meaning from the context, which is a necessary skill in life. Code switching can also influence the way EFL learners connect to other people using a foreign language. Second, code-switching has been considered a strategy used by teachers that use the mother tongue to hide their language insufficiency. The same "rules" that apply in a bilingual situation should apply in the classroom because a classroom is a language community that tries to give its participants opportunities to learn and utilize language by giving them meaningful input.

Usually, teachers of English as a foreign language switch codes to help students understand grammar. By using the L1, by switching codes the EFL teachers can assist students to transfer their L1 knowledge into the foreign language, so as Cole (1998) says: "a teacher can exploit students' previous L1 learning experience to increase their understanding of L2". The teacher also uses it to signal the transition from one stage of the lesson to the other, to give instructions, and to manage the class. Thus, according to Sert (2005), switching codes in an EFL classroom functions to switch topics affective functions, and repetitive functions. For their dialogue to continue and to compensate for their lack of language production, students switch codes to obtain translations for unknown terms in the target language. Additionally, they use code-switching to accentuate or support the idea they want to convey. They repeat to ensure that they fully comprehend the linguistic input and to demonstrate their understanding to the teacher.

Many studies consider code-switching to be both common and an effective teaching and learning tool in EFL situations. We shouldn't employ translation in class since, according to Cook (2001), bilinguals constantly switch between languages, and foreign language learners constantly translate in their minds. According to studies, code-switching is a useful technique for achieving a variety of communicative and metalinguistic goals, comprehending concepts, and exploring their ideas.

Student's questionnaire show that EFL students have a positive attitude toward teachers' use of L1 in EFL classes (Xhemaili, 2017). Students use their native language when they do not understand a specific word or concept, to discuss with their colleagues before speaking in English, to ask questions, and to express opinions or ideas which they were unable to do in the target language. Xhemaili further states that EFL learners point out the need of using their mother tongue during the courses as it helped them with being more confident in expressing themselves. They claim that English teachers' use of L1 helped them learn and understand English more easily. Students admit that EFL teachers typically use L1 to explain ideas and concepts that seem hard to be understood by students, to check their understanding, and to elicit language. The majority of the students confirmed that it was pretty difficult to understand the English lessons if the English teacher completely used English.

In his observation in classrooms, Xhemaili (2017) finds out that only a few students could interact in English with the teacher concerning the material that teachers were teaching. Results show that English teachers do use the mother tongue (L1) during classes. L1 is generally used mostly in informal situations, such as when it comes to explaining complex grammar rules, motivating students by sharing jokes, chatting, giving instructions, and clarifying the meaning of specific unknown words. Mother tongue was also used: when students talked to each other (in pair or group work). The students use L1 to ask for help from each other. Most of the EFL students used L1 to ask questions to teachers, whereas teachers clarified to the student's inquiries in both English and students' L1.

Xhemaili (2017) also observes that teachers sometimes wrote phrases or sentences on the board and asked students to translate them together. EFL teachers asked some wide-ranging related questions to activate the students' background/general knowledge in order to increase their comprehension. In order to help their understanding, teachers also used flashcards, definitions, pictures, and synonyms to describe the word(s), but didn't directly translate them.

In his study Xhemaili (2017), also asks EFL teachers to answer whether or not they use their mother tongue in their classes and if yes, why they think this could be more effective than using English only, and some of their answers are listed in the table below.

Albanian	**Incorrect translation**	**Correct translation**
Aktualisht	actually (në fakt)	Currently
Edukim	education (arsim)	Upbringing
ekonomist (që merret me një biznes të caktuar, jo me shkencën e ekonomisë)	economist (ekonomist që merret me shkencën e ekon.)	Accountant
Gjimnaz	gymnasium (palestër)	high school
inxhinier (që nuk merret me sisteme shumë të ndërlikuara)	engineer (inxhinier që merret me sisteme shumë të ndërlikuara)	Mechanic
klasë (në kuptimin e dhomës së nxënësve)	class (shtresë sociale, nivel, grup nx.)	Classroom
klasë (nivel shkollor)	Class	grade (Am.), form (Br.)
Kontrolloj	control (zotëroj)	check (on), monitor
Library	library (bibliotekë)	bookstore, bookshop
Note	note (shënim)	grade (Am.), mark (Br.)
Rregulloj	regulate (vë në kontroll, sistemoj)	Fix
Shef	chief (kryetar) chef (kuzhinier)	Boss

Some concepts are more difficult and have to be translated into students' L1 in order to help them follow up on the activities and achieve better results. Students' mother tongue enables students to understand new concepts that are first created in English and as such, they need exclusive explanations in L1. The learner benefits greatly from using L1 since they are better able to comprehend concepts and acquire all language abilities. Students may need to translate concepts they find difficult into their native language in order to understand them better. Students may be less nervous when learning difficult concepts in English.

Code-switching can have a positive or negative impact on the speakers or writers, depending on the relative unit structure of the L1 and L2. Most learners apply their native language knowledge to a second language, and this transition can result in both positive and negative transitions. Positive transference occurs when the meaning of the transferred element matches the native speaker's acceptance. Negative transfer is seen when the opposite occurs which results in errors. The greater the difference between the two languages the greater the negative transfer. Similarities and differences in word meaning and form affect how quickly learners acquire a foreign language (Odlin, 1989).

3. Methodology

Considering the importance of the research question (Janusheva, 2022), this probe answers the question of what are the circumstances ELT teachers and students switch between English and Albanian, with the goal to better understand teachers' and students' language choice regarding code switching in their ELT classrooms. Thus, a sample of 15 of interviews conducted with primary, secondary, and higher education ELF teachers and of 15 interviews carried out with ELT high school and university students, from the Republic of Kosovo is set.

The sample is purposeful, because as stated by Lincoln & Guba (1985), each sample is determined for a particular purpose. The sample determination is further in line with the attitudes of Cheek (2008), Yin (2011) and Gentles et al. (2015) that interview transcripts may be used as a sample. As a method for collecting data, the interview is used by many researchers (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Hughes, 1996; Richards, 2009; Seidman 2013). The interviews' questions are divided according the meaning, which according to Richards (2009) enables its natural flow. The questions are related with the circumstances in which teachers use code switching, thus, according to Patton (2002), they affect teachers' and students' beliefs. The interviews' are coded, using the suggestions of Strauss & Corbin (1990), and the data analysis exploits the general interpretative-inductive approach used by many (Marshall 1999; Meriam, 2002; Thomas 2006; Creswell 2009; Kahlke 2014; Harding & Whitehead 2016), which does not have a formal methodological frame and stress the inductive thinking which leads to creating idea form the collected data.

4. Analysis, results, discussion

4.1. Teachers' interviews

Many of the factors that lead to code-switching in a bilingual setting also apply to language classes. All educational levels use L1 frequently in daily practice, sometimes unconsciously for reasons other than the ones that cause bilinguals to switch codes. The authors separately code the interviews and then compare the emerged codes and categories. The main categories which arise from the teachers' interview are: being close to the students, showing respect, elucidating instructions and concepts, contributing in effective teaching, students' lacking of language capability, checking students' understanding, underlining specific issue, and keeping discipline.

According to interviews, EFL teachers admit using a more informal language variety with students to show commonality or use some words or phrases of a student's native language (in cases when the language spoken in the classroom is different).

> *By using students' mother tongue (L1), I assure my students that I am close to them and that they do not have to hesitate when it comes to them expressing their own opinions.*

There are also cases where teachers who share the same cultural identity with a student may use code-switching when speaking to that student to show respect which is in line with Baker (2006), who said that code-switching is a technique of adapting language for the purpose of individual intentions, such as creating relations among members of a multilingual community, and linking gaps with speakers who have the same cultural identity.

Teachers also admit using code-switching to clarify instructions or difficult concepts. Teachers use an equivalent word in their native language instead of the target language term because they are aware that some of their students do not know the term in the L2, and this is known as the equivalence. An instance of equivalence was when an Albanian-speaking professor (considering that there are foreign professors working in our institution) was explaining something about the nature to his students, he used the word "lartësi mbidetare" instead of the word "altitude" because he knew that his students do not yet know the English word for altitude. If that teacher wants to explain to his students something regarding altitude, he will most likely use code-switching again to help students understand the topic correctly.

> *When I want to explain specific difficult topics/words I use students' mother tongue (L1) which assures me that they understand it better.*

Some EFL teachers declare that some students experience difficulties in understanding instructions, specifically referring to complicated topics in formal speeches, thus explaining these in a less formal way will help students understand their assignments and new concepts better which in turn results in better achievements. Some acknowledge that occasionally they hesitate to use code-switching because they feel unauthentic when they do not speak the L1 of multilingual students.

> *I have students who do not speak Albanian since their mother tongue is Bosnian or Turkish, so I try not to use Albanian language for the sake of these students.*

The interviews also suggest that in order to explain hard concepts, EFL teachers use visual materials or translated resources to aid students' access the information at their own pace or in a language they understand better (L1).

Most of the teachers that undergo the interviews admit that code-switching help them teach English communicatively.

> *I use code-switching to manage the classroom. Code-switching helps us manage class activities because in this way we can attract students' attention by using words in L1, while teaching in L2.*

Teachers say that they use code-switching to teach grammar and difficult words, which is in correlation with Cole (1998), who said that teachers of English as a foreign language switch codes to help students understand grammar.

> *By switching codes, we can easily explain difficult grammar concepts, since explaining difficult words/phrases in the L2 is much more difficult, considering students' language competencies.*

Teachers in EFL classrooms switched languages during conversations because their students do not have the language capabilities to understand them when they speak continuously in the L2. They use a technique known as floor-holding to not interrupt their conversation/lecture. For example, when a teacher is delivering a lecture on the effects of stress on people with low self-esteem, he uses the term "lodhje" referring to fatigue when saying: One of the symptoms of stress is "lodhje".

> *I know they do not understand the term (fatigue) and I chose to use the Albanian word (lodhje), so they would know what I am talking about and I would not stop my conversation.*

By switching codes, the EFL teachers can assist students to transfer their L1 knowledge into the foreign language, which is line with Sert (2005) who stated that teachers also uses code-switching to signal the transition from one stage of the lesson to the other, to give instructions, and to manage the class.

> *A teacher can exploit students' previous L1 learning experience to increase their understanding of L2. We use CS is to give instructions, specifically at the beginning of the classes in order to help students understand instructions appropriately, so they can complete required tasks.*

Some of the respondents report that they use code-switching to check students' comprehension which is in line with Xhemaili (2017) who declares that EFL teachers use code switching to ask some wide-ranging related questions to activate the students' background/general knowledge in order to increase their comprehension.

> *At the end of the course, students are expected to: be acquainted with vocabulary and key facts and concepts of English, be able to read and understand books in English, be able to follow lectures and take notes, be able to make an oral presentation on various topics, develop writing skills, etc., so by switching codes we would precisely measure whether our students achieved the goals or not.*

Many of the teachers claim that they use code-switching to highlight important points during the lecture which is in correlation to Baker (2006) who explained that from a sociolinguistics perspective code-switching performs a variety of functions such as to highlight a specific point.

> *By highlighting the most important points by using students' L1, helps them draw students' attention which according to them always results in proper understanding of the lesson.*

Some of interviewed teachers say that they use code switching to keep discipline in the classroom, admitting that they have to do it when it comes to disruptive students, since according to them, students underestimate English when it comes to such situations.

4.2. Students' interviews

Several categories arise from the students' interviews: manifesting better expression, defining and illuminating a concept or meaning easier, lacking of language competence, not revealing their language fluency, showing authority, creating interpersonal relations, not being consciousness.

The main reasons why EFL students switch from L1 to L2 to are to express themselves better, to clarify and explain certain meanings, to talk about specific topics and help them communicate with their peers better, which is in correlation with Johnson (2000 in Gudykunst, 2004) who states that code-switching also 'functions to announce specific identities, create certain meanings, and facilitate particular interpersonal relationships.

> *Even though I would love to express myself solely in English, it is quite impossible, since I do not have a rich vocabulary.*

> *When I want to clarify something I use words from my native language because by doing so, I feel like I am conveying the meaning appropriately.*

The majority of students consider the translation of phrases, sentences, clauses, and words as the first step to comprehending a text or a speech, and by using their L1, they can explain meaning better as well which is in line with Xhemaili (2017) who observes that teachers sometimes wrote phrases or sentences on the board and asked students to translate them together. The idea of translating words phrases and sentences is not in line with Cook (2001), who stated that we shouldn't employ translation in class since, according to him bilinguals constantly switch between languages, and foreign language learners constantly translate in their minds.

Students, use mother tongue (L1) to talk to each other in general, and specifically when they do the pair or group work. When it comes to facing difficulties, they use L1 to ask each other for help. Due to their limited English proficiency, majority of the EFL students were found to be using their mother tongue to ask questions to teachers and their colleagues. This is also in line with Xhemaili (2017) who said that only a few students could interact in English with the teacher concerning the material that teachers are teaching.

> *I feel shy to use L2 (foreign language) when asking questions to professors because I know that their English competencies are high and they can find mistakes in my grammar.*

Students also used code-switching to hide their language fluency in the foreign language which is in correlation with Zentella (1997), who claimed that code-switching may be used to disguise fluency or memory in the second language.

> *I do this with words that I think I am not pronouncing correctly, or that I think I am using inappropriately.*

Code-switching is used by students to also show switching from formal to informal circumstances and considered important because they can show authority, which is in line with Zentella (1997), who stated that code-switching is used to exercise control.

> *By code-switching I can show authority, mainly amongst their family members and friends.*

Some students declare that they change codes to modify language for the sake of personal intentions/achievements.

> *I use code switching, such as when creating interpersonal relations among other bilinguals, and connecting gaps with speakers who share the same cultural identity.*

Some EFL students sometimes switch between codes inadvertently, without realizing that they use a native word. Speaking of their hobbies or explaining some personal issues, they use L2 without even apprehending it or intending to use it.

> *Other than reading books, I love playing tennis with my siblings "fundjavave" (on weekends).*

> *I have problems interacting with people and this causes me parehati (discomfort).*

An interesting situation is switch between codes when a concept or a specific word does not exist or does not have an identical translation in the L2. When explaining to his students the concept of thought and language and their relation to each other, the teacher tells his students that there are words that do not have their equivalent words in another language, such as the German expression "schadenfreude" which is the perfect word for this case. The German word "schadenfreude" consists of the words "schaden" (evil) and "freude" (pleasure), and it means basically "being pleased because others experience bad things". EFL professors can use this technique of code-switching in such situations to help their students understand formal literary and/or scientific terms that do not have an equivalent in the L2.

5. Conclusion

The research results show that EFL teachers and EFL students know the functions of code-switching in class and when necessary, they agree to use it, in specific cases. From the results, it can be concluded that code switching occurs in ELT classes almost all the time. When it comes to communicating thoughts and ideas, code-switching is a strong component, as well as in ELT classrooms, consequently, it helps you communicate the meaning. The participants strongly believe that code switching is an important tool for teachers and students when learning and teaching English as a foreign language. Where teachers and their students have the same mother tongue it is easier for both sides to switch codes, which results in better understanding.

As teaching strategy in English as a foreign language class, the participants strongly advise that when giving instructions, explaining new topics, defining complex unknown words, explaining new definitions, elaborating difficult grammar concepts, managing classrooms, reinforcing students' actions, and overall, motivating them, EFL professors should use code-switching. This will help the students to improve their learning outcomes and understand things appropriately.

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