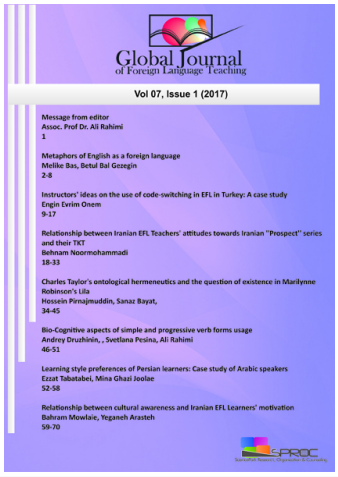


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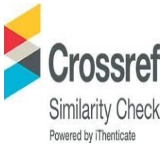
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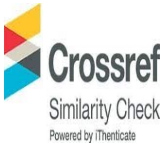
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Instructors' ideas on the use of code-switching in EFL in Turkey: A case study

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Abstract

Code switching is a very common phenomenon in EFL language classrooms. The goal of this case study is to find out the possible reasons why EFL instructors employ code switching in ELT classes in Turkey. To achieve this, a brief questionnaire composed of the most common seven reasons mentioned in the relevant literature on code switching in language classrooms was compiled by the researcher and administered to ten EFL teachers working at different state universities in Turkey. The participants were asked to rank order the reasons from the most ideal to the least ideal purpose of employing code switching in classrooms for themselves and were later asked to write the reasons for their choices. It was found that "leaving no confusion about the topic" was the most common reason for the participants and the teachers who prioritized that reason seemed to have similar ideas about employing code switching in EFL. Discussion of the results and implications for future research are presented.

Keywords: Code switching, language teaching, ideas about code switching, foreign language instructors.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

Code switching, as put forward by Murray and Christison (2011), refers to a shift from a language to another utilized by bilinguals. In another definition by Lightbown and Spada (2013), code switching is "the use of words or phrases from more than one language within a conversation" (p. 31). A semantic model of conversational code switching proposed by Gumperz (1982, as cited in Then & Ting, 2011) is a common framework in the code switching literature and there are many studies based on this framework (Murray & Christison, 2011; Then & Ting, 2011; Timucin & Baytar, 2015). The framework focuses on the distinction between two main types of code switching; situational and metaphorical. According to Murray and Christison (2011), situational code switching is "when the speaker changes language or variety because of changes in the setting or speakers.'' On the other hand, metaphorical code switching is related to the tone of the interaction (Murray & Christison, 2011). As code switching is a strategy used to convey meaning utilizing different linguistic variables, this framework is able to explain the reasons for code switching (Then & Ting, 2011). However, as mentioned by Thompson and Harrison (2014), "code-switching research has tended to look at more advanced bilinguals, while less consideration has been given to code-switching in the foreign language classrooms and especially these interactions between students and teachers". In other words, although code switching is a sociolinguistic phenomenon, its pedagogic uses in language classrooms are ignored. Therefore, this study aims to focus on the pedagogical uses of code switching as a strategy employed by teachers.

In foreign language teaching settings, code switching refers to shifting from the target language to the native tongue of the learners or vice versa. Teachers use code switching for various reasons and functions. Thompson and Harrison (2014), categorize functions and reasons of code switching as "translation (developing and expanding vocabulary), as a time-saving measure (giving directions, answering questions, explaining grammar, and classroom management), and to build rapport (establishing a relationship with students and maintaining a flexible environment).'' Likewise, Sert (2005) stated code switching is used "in order to build solidarity and intimate relations with the students.''Similarly, Then and Ting (2011) highlighted the purposes of using code switching as reiteration (or reformation), referring to the simplification or translation of the language for students by the teacher to promote a better understanding. For instance, when a teacher is teaching a grammar point, s/he switches back and forth to the native tongue and code switching is used "to transfer the necessary knowledge for the students for clarity" (Sert, 2005). Code switching in language classrooms is also used for various other purposes such as encouragement of participation, as an attention focusing device, to give feedback and classroom discipline (Thompson &Harrison, 2014 for a review).

Although research reveals that code switching is a common practice in language teaching (e.g., Horasan, 2014; Murray & Christison, 2011; Sert, 2005; Then & Ting, 2011; Thompson & Harrison, 2014; Timuçin & Baytar, 2015), using code switching in language classrooms is still debated (Then & Ting, 2011). There are some studies claiming that L1 use in classroom has drawbacks. Firstly, as in most cases of foreign language learning/teaching settings, the use of target language is considered as a crucial part of classroom interaction and exposure to the target language and communication takes place exclusively in the L2 language classrooms (Krashen, 1982 as cited in Turnbull, 2001). Secondly, as summarized by Ustunel and Seedhouse (2005), it is believed that there is a higher correlation between using target language in the class and the overall target language proficiency. With respect to this positive relationship, using L1 in the classroom might result in students' ignorance of the input given in L1 (Ustunel & Seedhouse, 2005). On the other hand, research shows that using L1 has many advantages. For instance, as Celik (2005) summarizes, limited L1 use is useful primarily for classroom

management, scene setting, and language analysis. Similarly, Ustunel and Seedhouse (2005) highlight that excluding L1 is impractical and code switching is time saving. As it is seen, the debate is still on.

Studies on perceptions of both teachers and students towards using code switching during teaching show a positive attitude towards using code switching during language teaching. For example, according to Sen(2010), teachers believed that using code switching reassured them about the increase in the students' learning and it was a good tool for explicit teaching. In another research, Ustunel and Seedhouse (2005) analysed the way teachers use code switching and found that code switching was used to help students out and leave no confusion and code switching makes the subject matter more clear. Studies concerning students' perceptions of the use of code switching revealed similar results with the positive effects of code switching in language classes. For example, Macaro and Lee (2013) found that neither young nor older learners favoured the total exclusion of the first language from the classroom interaction. The results of the study conducted by Then and Ting (2011) suggested that code switching had a positive effect on learning.

1.2. Statement of the problem

Although there are many studies showing that teachers have positive views towards code switching along with functions of its use in language teaching (Celik, 2005; Horasan, 2014; Murray & Christison, 2011; Sert, 2005; Then & Ting, 2011; Thompson & Harrison, 2014; Timucin & Baytar, 2015; Ustunel & Seedhouse, 2005), to the best of the researchers' knowledge, there has been no study conducted to reveal language teachers' views about prioritizing some of the functions of code switching mentioned in the literature over others along with their ideas about such ranking. In other words, teachers' views regarding the ranking of the functions of code switching on the use of code switching during language teaching has not been focused on in the previous literature.

1.3. Significance of the study

The findings of this study will contribute to the literature by revealing language instructors' ranking of the functions of the code switching in accordance with their views of code switching and the reasons for such ranking.

1.4. Research questions

This study aims to find answers to the two inter-related research questions:

1-) How do instructors order the functions of code switching in accordance with the relevant literature?
2-) What are the reasons for the instructors to prioritize some functions of code switching over the others?

2. Methodology

2.1. Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at a private university in Turkey. The participants' were foreign language instructors who were also studying at the MA TEFL program of the university. They had at least two years of experience in teaching English and except for two of the participants, all of the participants were native speakers of Turkish. Table 1 shows details about the participants.

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Participant #	Age	Gender	Academic Major	Years of experience
1	28	Female	ELT	5
2	28	Female	ELT	5
3	28	Female	ELT	7
4	28	Female	ELT	5
5	27	Female	ELT	5
6	28	Female	Linguistics	6
7	41	Female	Primary school education	17
8	26	Male	ELT	2
9	35	Male	Literature	13
10	25	Female	Literature	2

As it can be seen in the table, two of the participants were male while the rest of the participants were female, with their ages ranging from 26 to 41. Six of the language instructors participated in this study were graduates of ELT departments, while two of them were graduated from English literature departments. Of the final two participants, one was a graduate of English linguistics department and the other one graduated from primary school education department. When the participants' years of experience in teaching English was analysed, it was seen that it ranged from two years to seventeen.

2.2. Research Design

This study had a mixed methods research design, including both quantitative and qualitative data to obtain deeper information about the ideas of language instructors in terms of the functions of code-switching.

2.3. Data Collection Instrument

The researcher prepared a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) to collect data on language instructors' ideas about prioritizing the functions of code-switching in classroom use. The questionnaire prepared by the researcher consisted of three sections. In the first section, the participants were asked to provide some demographic data (gender, age and years of experience in teaching foreign language). For the second section of the questionnaire, the researcher reviewed the literature (e.g. Celik, 2005; Horasan, 2014; Murray & Christison, 2011; Sert, 2005; Then & Ting, 2011; Thompson & Harrison, 2014; Timucin & Baytar, 2015; Ustunel & Seedhouse, 2005; etc.) and listed the most common seven functions of code switching for classroom use in the questionnaire. These functions included *increasing students' learning, leaving no confusion about the topic, building solidarity among students, translation, saving time, classroom management and focusing attention*. The final section of the questionnaire included an open ended question for participants to write about the reasons for their

ranking. The questionnaire was in English and since the participants were all foreign language teachers, they were assumed to have prior knowledge about code-switching and use it in their classrooms.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

The data collection took place one day. First, the researcher asked for the consent of the MA TEFL program of the university and the participants. After granting the permission, the participants were administered the questionnaire; they were asked to provide some demographic data about themselves and then rank the functions of code-switching in the questionnaire from the most important to the least important according to their personal views about code-switching. Finally, the participants were told to elaborate on the reasons for their choices in terms of prioritizing of one function over the others.

2.5. Data Analysis

The quantitative data, the order of the functions by the participants, were analysed by descriptive statistics. The function which was ranked as the top reason most was regarded as the most prioritized function of code-switching in this study. The qualitative data, the views of the participants emerging from the open ended question, were grouped together in terms of the function they refer to and the reasons were presented.

3. Findings

3.1. Ranking of the Functions

The participants were asked to rank the seven functions of code-switching from the most important to the least important according to their own ideas. The function which was ranked as number one most frequently was accepted as the most prioritized function of code-switching by the participants. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Functions and the number of times they were prioritized

Function	Frequency of function prioritized
Leaving no confusion about the topic	5
Increasing students' learning	2
Building solidarity among students	2
Saving time	1
Classroom management	0
Translation	0
Focusing attention	0

N = 10

The results showed that *leaving no confusion about the topic* was the most common function of code-switching. In other words, the participants prioritized this function over the others most of the time. *Increasing students' learning about the topic* and *building solidarity among students* were the other functions which were thought to be important and four instructors in total prioritized these functions. *Saving time* was the final function which was also considered as important although it was not as frequently prioritized as the previous functions. On the other hand, of the seven functions, three of them, *classroom management*, *translation* and *focusing attention*, were not considered as the most important functions of code-switching even once.

3.2. Instructors' Reasons for Ranking of the Functions

Since *leaving no confusion about the topic* was the most prioritized function of code-switching in language classrooms, it was obvious that the instructors paid most attention to it. In fact, one of the instructors wrote that "I prioritized the functions on the basis that I pay attention in the class and my experiences of code-switching occur". She went on to say that "the highest function is the most common instance of the occurrence of code-switching in my classes", signalling that she used code-switching as a means to make explanations for her students to understand the subject matter better. Similarly, preventing misunderstandings was another motive for prioritizing this function over the items. For instance, another instructor wrote that "the students may misunderstand a topic when it is presented in English. In order to eliminate those misunderstandings, code-switching may be used". Also, level of the students was an important reason put forward by the instructors for prioritizing this function. For example, a 28 age year old female instructor mentioned that she generally used code-switching to be clear and ensure the low proficiency level students' understanding since they may have difficulties in following the lesson understanding. Similarly, another female instructor highlighted that she used code-switching "just to make sure we (students and the teacher) are all on the same page and avoid confusion". In a similar sense, checking understanding was another motive for prioritizing this function. In fact, one of the participants stated that she elicited Turkish from them to check understanding. To sum up, it could be said that the most fundamental reasons for prioritizing leaving no confusion about the topic over the other functions of code-switching was leading students to a clearer perspective of the topic.

Increasing students' learning was another function considered the second most important function of code-switching. For example, one of the female instructors stated that this was the most important function since she believed that her job was to help students to learn better and this is the min principle of teaching. She went on to say even though classroom management, teaching techniques and other skills might vary from teacher to teacher, the main objective of any teacher should be to enhance students' learning and that was why she valued that function of code-switching over the other more. Similarly, a male instructor wrote that increasing learning was important for him and he generally tried to code-switch to Turkish to help students learn better. As a result, the instructors who thought increasing students' learning was important believed that this function was at the very heart of teaching.

Another function of code-switching, *building solidarity among students*, was also found important by the instructors who participated in this study. For instance, a female instructor stated that her primary use of code-switching in the classroom was to build rapport and she gave some examples of code-switching such as "kolay gelsin" (similar to saying *take it easy* in a situation where someone is struggling) and "geçmiş olsun" (similar to saying *hope you feel better soon* after a painful situation). She explained the reason for using such phrases as to keep the students feel that she genuinely cared

for them. Another related reason seen was the comic effect of code-switching. One male instructor who prioritized this function wrote that he liked being funny in the class and using code-switching for this purpose made it more fun. Consequently, making students feel relaxed and happy was the underlying reason for the instructors who prioritized this function over the others.

The final function which was ranked as important was *saving time*. The one female instructor who valued it most explained her reason simply by writing "when students are taught in English, they may not understand the topic correctly. In order not to teach it over and over again, you teach it in Turkish." In other words, she thought switching to Turkish when there is a miscommunication would be a good idea to overcome the language barrier.

4. Conclusion

As used by many foreign language teachers, code-switching can be regarded as a strategy with different functions. This study examined instructors' prioritizing the functions of code-switching in their classrooms and the reasons for their choices. It was found that the most accepted function for code-switching was *leaving no confusion about the topic*, followed by *increasing students' learning*, *building solidarity among students* and *saving time*. However, other functions of code-switching including *classroom management*, *translation* and *focusing attention* were not considered primary by the participants in this study. The findings may suggest that the instructors in this study believed that helping their students to have a clearer understanding of the subject matter and assisting them to learn better while establishing more friendly bonds in the class without wasting time for unnecessary repetitions were most important objectives. The functions they prioritized seemed to comply with these objectives. The reason why they did not prioritize some of the functions might be interrelatedness of them. In other words, the instructors in this study might have thought *classroom management*, *translation* and *focusing attention* as part of other functions.

Although this study is an eager attempt to see language instructors' ideas about code-switching, it is certainly not a deeply covering study. Yet, this study can be considered to pave the way for future studies for shedding light on the ideas of language instructors on code-switching in ELT.

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Appendix I
The Questionnaire

Part A: Please provide information about yourself

Age: Gender: Academic Major: Years of experience:

Part B: Below are some functions of code switching in classroom use. Please rank them from the most important (1) to the least important (7) in your personal experience.

Increasing students' learning	__
Leaving no confusion about the topic	__
Building solidarity among students	__
Translation	__
Saving time	__
Classroom management	__
Focusing attention	__

Part C: Please write the reason why you have prioritized one specific function over the others.

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Thank you for your cooperation ☺