

Code Switching by Novice Teachers in EFL Classes and its Effects on Students: Cihan University-Erbil

Huda Y. Abdulwahid

Department of English Language, Cihan University-Erbil,
Kurdistan Region, Iraq

Abstract—Code Switching (CS) is shifting from one language to another in a dialogue, a lesson, a sermon, etc. It is used across the board in multilingual communities deliberately and unconsciously. It has many benefits. It has many negative impacts, though. It might distract students' attention and result in opposite consequences. Therefore, in this study, using CS by novice teachers who do not have enough experience as a medium of explaining the taught material. Besides, it takes into consideration students' attitudes toward CS as positive or negative. If they understand better after implementing CS, they consider it positive. If, on the contrary, distracts their attention, they consider it negative. The data for this study were collected from 70 students through distributing an open questionnaire and direct observation. They were analyzed using IBM SPSS. The outcomes proposed that some students switch codes at the level of words to have a smooth conversation with colleagues. However, some novice lecturers tend to explain the whole lesson using students' first language to make sure that they have grasped it well. They do so due to the lack of experience and shortage of vocabulary. The results also pinpointed that some students have a positive reaction toward CS, yet there are many students who do not prefer following it.

Keywords—Code-switching, EFL classroom, Observation, Questionnaire, Student CS, Teacher CS.

I. INTRODUCTION

The switching between two or more languages within a single speech, sentence, or element was defined as Code Switching (CS) by Poplack in 1980. In a lot of communities where many people speak multiple languages, this strategy is highly popular. In the Kurdistan region, for example, in public places, people keep switching codes to get them understood by others. This strategy is also used in academic places but as a last resort since it does not always imply a positive implication. Therefore, in bilingual classrooms, the idea of bilingualism manifests itself in the form of teacher's negative views toward students who switch languages during class interaction (Boztepe, 2003). Some students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) prefer using English as much as possible to get the utmost benefit. Some students, however, cannot grasp what is taught, so they unconsciously force the lecturer to switch to their first language or their colleagues to help them understand what the teacher explained. In terms of completing the relational and referential roles, CS is viewed from a sociolinguistic viewpoint as the way to express both social and linguistic meanings (Bensen and Çavuşoğlu, 2013). The sociolinguistic approach prioritizes issues like how social meaning is formed in CS and what

specific discourse functions it fulfills, viewing it as largely a discourse phenomenon (Boztepe, 2003). Blom and Gumperz (1972) mentioned that previous attempts to deal with CS systematically had provided a classification of switches into two types. This classification is based on the sociolinguistic mechanisms of language choice that allow for CS. Situational shifts, which include shifts for topics, and metaphorical shifts, which include shifts for focus, are the two types. This was confirmed by Scotton and Ury (1977).

In the 1980s, CS as a distinct phenomenon and foreign language teachers' tactic gained notice. Since then, there has been a spirited discussion between opposing viewpoints over whether switching back and forth between the native language and the target language in a foreign language learning classroom is beneficial or detrimental. Besides, some researchers consider CS as a negative approach to be used especially in classrooms. Gumperz and Hernandez-Chaves (1975) claimed that those who code-switch make a mess out of the conversation and cannot speak the language properly. This also had been advocated by Rios and Campos (2013) to some extent. They claimed that while teachers should not encourage CS, it should not be severely punished in the early stages of the learning process. Positive reinforcement will gradually make the need to switch codes less or even go

away entirely as the learners themselves come to understand their own shortcomings and limitations.

Learners of a foreign language keep struggling with vocabulary along the process of language learning (Al-Faris and Jasim, 2021).

Different strategies might be included in the class to let students get what is explained. One of them, besides CS, is flipped classes. It has been noticed that, after applying all the sessions and marking the results of both the traditional class and the flipped class, the number of pass students increased relatively in flipped class in comparison to the traditional class (Abbasian and Azeez, 2021). Learning is frequently achieved through the collaborative construction of knowledge among participants in student-centered activities and social interactions in a communicative classroom (Pica, 1994), such as in the polytechnic communication skills classroom, where interactions among learners are abundant. Regarding flipped classes, it has been noticed that the number of pass students increased relatively in flipped classes in comparison to the traditional class (Abbasian and Azeez, 2021, p. 103). As a result, it is crucial to comprehend language use and how information is created in the classroom since CS and code choices constitute the “very conduct by which knowledge is built” (Cromdal, 2003, p. 57). This phenomenon is also available in the Region of Kurdistan-Iraq, and in many academic places: Schools and universities. This study will focus on this phenomenon, especially at Cihan University-Erbil which is well-known for its multinational lecturers and students. CS is implemented in many classes and at different departments, but the focus will be on the English department. The data for this research will be collected by two different methods: Direct observation and an open questionnaire. The researcher will have a direct observation of many classes given to different stages, but the questionnaire that is open will only be given to 2nd and 3rd years. The questionnaire will consist of 15 questions. Then, the data collected from these two methods will be analyzed quantitatively using IBM SPSS and Jamovi.

A. Value of the Study

Under certain circumstances, lecturers might be obliged to switch the code to make sure students have grasped the lesson. These circumstances are many but the main ones are the followings:

1. The presence of students from various backgrounds that are speaking many languages.
2. Easiness. Novice lecturers who lack experience and want to put their minds at ease so they switch the code.

This urges the researcher to carry out this research. It is hoped that the results of the present study may be of some values to the students, teachers of English, and textbook designers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

CS is a strategy used to let people, in general, and students, in particular, understand well since it has some

linguistic and sociolinguistic functions. It has some pros and cons yet. Moghadam et al., (2012) discussed the main functions of CS in their study entitled “CS as a Medium of Instruction in an EFL Classroom.” Their research revealed that the socializing function was where CS appeared most frequently. Checking for understanding happened the least, and both clarification and translation were employed. In addition, they discovered that the lack of language knowledge and the informal atmosphere were the main causes of CS. In addition, they made an effort to educate teachers and students on the limitations of CS because careless use of it could have negative long-term effects on how well the target language is produced by learners.

In his study titled “CS in EFL classes and the perspectives of the students and teachers,” Horasan (2014) examined CS functions as well. He made an effort to concentrate on the CS usage in EFL classrooms by the professors and students. He revealed that CS performs a variety of conscious and unconscious tasks. Although its employment outside of the classroom is unavoidably sought, we cannot guarantee it. Therefore, teachers employ CS to draw students’ attention, assess comprehension, and improve classroom management, among other things. Since teachers’ use of CS is for the students’ progress in the learning process and should not be taken for granted, CS can be used in EFL classrooms. He added, however, that CS did not represent teachers’ proficiency in L2 or lack thereof. Instead, CS should be viewed and utilized as a tool with several purposes that aid in both teaching and learning.

On the other side, Obaidullah’s research lessens the drawbacks of CS (2016). In his work, “CS in EFL Classrooms: A Bangladeshi Perspective,” he only discussed its benefits. He looked into the overall state of computer science in Bangladeshi universities from a variety of perspectives, including those of both teachers and students. His research revealed numerous benefits of CS that contribute to the effectiveness of an EFL lesson. His research also showed that although students were not permitted to switch codes frequently, teachers and students had a good attitude toward it and agreed that it helps to improve learning and gives a better grasp of the lesson content. Finally, he stated that mother tongue interference becomes unavoidably necessary when teaching EFL in a classroom context. Extra care should be taken when teaching English in Bangladesh at the primary, intermediate, and higher secondary levels since it is a required subject. If English proficiency can be developed in students at those levels, CS in higher education will only be a sporadic occurrence.

Puspawati (2018) focused on its benefits and examined its three categories in his paper, “Teachers’ Use of CS in EFL Classroom and its Functions.” He discovered that the instructors’ use of CS occurred in the intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag switching levels, with the inter-sentential level – where teachers switched codes in the clauses and sentences level – being the most commonly utilized, and tag switching was used the least frequently. He stated that

teachers utilize CS to enable pupils with low levels of L2 proficiency, to aid in student learning, and to facilitate effective teaching. The instructors thought that CS may be a useful tool for facilitating teaching and learning in the classroom. This demonstrated that the research's teachers had made thoughtful choices on the use of CS in their instruction. Regarding the purposes of utilizing CS, teachers employed CS for knowledge construction and transmission tasks such as teaching new vocabulary and language expressions, clarifying grammatical concepts, and explaining the material. In this study, the teachers' use of CS also served as a tool for managing the class or the classroom. When instructing students and asking them to repeat questions, the teachers employed CS. The purpose of using CS in the classroom was to help pupils understand. The final purpose was to keep relationships between professors and students lighthearted so as to preserve a close-knit environment for the pupils.

This issue is considered by other researchers as well. In their work titled "An Investigation of the Use of CS in EFL Classroom: Attitudes and Perceptions," Patmasari et al., (2022) considered this issue alongside teachers' perceptions on CS. The chosen participants who were interviewed revealed that they had favorable views and opinions about CS in EFL classrooms. They thought that changing codes had a beneficial effect on their learning. They acknowledged that CS can be employed as a strategy for improving one's English. In addition, they believed that since CS aids students and fosters effective teacher-student communication, it should be permitted for teachers to employ in EFL classrooms. The findings also revealed that learning strategies mostly describe the pedagogical context (Mohammed and Raewf, 2018).

Both ESL and EFL lessons make use of CS. In their article titled, "The Role of CS as a Communicative Tool in an ESL Teacher Education Classroom," Azlan and Narasuman (2012). They looked into how CS works as a communicative tool in a Malaysian tertiary institution's English as a Second Language teacher education program. Since they are all going to be English teachers, it was supposed that the kids would be masters of English language. The research, however, showed that these students code switched in practically every line they uttered, even when giving official presentations in class and being graded for them. In addition, many grammatical mistakes were committed during the interview sessions. If these mistakes are not fixed, they risk becoming fossilized. However, if these pupils continue to take shortcuts by switching languages rather than exercising proper grammar and vocabulary, the process of self-rectification would be hindered. If the employment of the first language does not replace the target language, used a little, they attempted to highlight the advantages of CS. If L2 learners are to acquire their fluency and competency in the language to the level suitable for an English language instructor, they said that they must receive the necessary amount of input and practice in the target language. CS implementation is beneficial for student learning and is suggested to be utilized, within limits, when instructing students with low competency. The benefits and downsides

of CS will also be examined in this study, but solely from the perspective of the students.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

English language department students at Cihan University-Erbil constitute the sample of this study. This study is based on clarifying the point that CS is the most favorite phenomenon or the least favorite one in regard to contributing to or destructing language learning as a foreign language. The language of learning and teaching in the class is mainly English, yet Kurdish or Arabic is also accommodated due to the low proficiency of the students and teachers. The age of the learners in the study ranged from 18 to 21 years. The majority of the learners speak Kurdish since it is their first language (L1), while a few of them speak Arabic since they are originally Arabs. The teacher/observer who took part in the study was Arab.

B. Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected through a questionnaire distributed to students of the second stage and third stages at the Department of English, Cihan University-Erbil. The questionnaire consists of 15 questions, and the other way of getting the data was direct observation. The researcher observed four classes; two for each. The duration of each class is 50 min. To lessen the chance of being influenced by comprehending CS, CS was not explained during obtaining the data. It was explained to the students that they could occasionally speak in their own dialect. In this instance, the students' engagement in class was unstructured and unplanned. At the beginning, the teacher started explaining the lesson related to speech organs. The students were shown slides with some headings, then the teacher started elaborating on these headings. The teacher asked a lot of questions after finishing each slide. Regarding 2nd-year classes, the teacher started by reminding students of the previous lesson to link it with the current one. Then, he displayed some slides to elaborate on.

C. Data Analysis

CS to Kurdish or Arabic languages was identified and counted based on the observations and the questionnaire. The data analysis and interpretation for the CS analysis focused on the following four questions:

1. What are the kinds of CS language functions?
2. What are the influences of CS?
3. What are the learners' and instructors' attitudes toward CS use in EFL classrooms?
4. What are the benefits and drawbacks of CS regarding students' comprehension of the target language?

The data analysis used a mixed approach to address these research questions, and the chosen data were examined, explained, and discussed in the section on findings that follow.

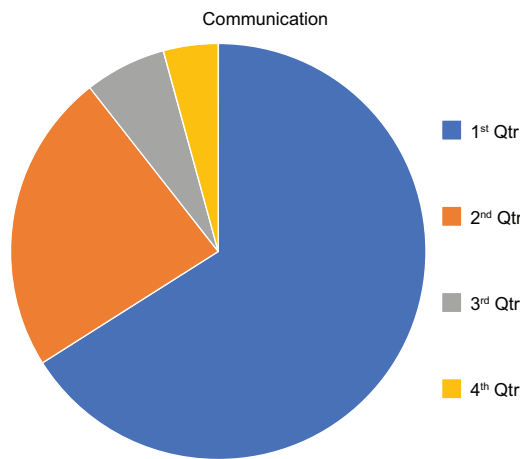
IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Through the distribution of the questionnaire and the classroom observations for this study, it was evident that both the teacher and all students used CS in the classroom. In addition, it was evident that the teacher and the students used CS more frequently when engaging in socializing, persuasion, and other specific language functions. Each question will be addressed separately to begin the analysis, which will then go on to the observations.

A. Questionnaire Analysis

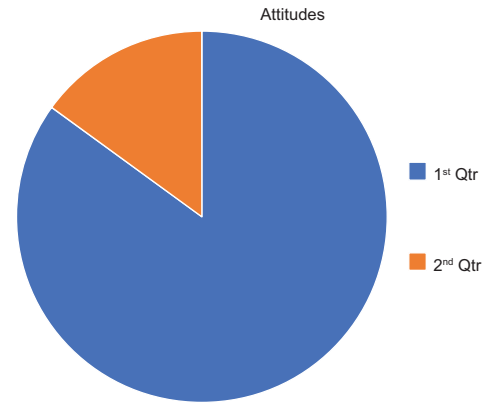
CS and communication

As it is shown in the chart below and regarding the distributed questionnaire, a few students use CS in communication. The majority showed that they use only Kurdish since it is their mother tongue. Around 23% just use English since they are studying English and they are eager to practice the language as much as possible. Whereas around %4.6 use CS, so they use Kurdish and English when communicating with their classmates. The least percentage is dedicated to the CS but including either Kurdish, English, and Arabic or using only Arabic and English. The same percentage expresses those who only use Arabic. It can be concluded that students do not tend to use CS for communication since most of them speak Kurdish or Arabic, so they rarely use English in communication.



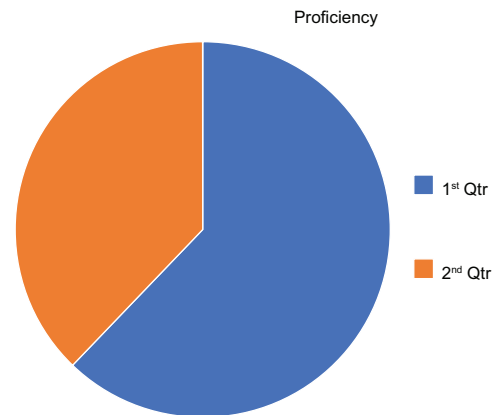
Students' attitude towards CS

As displayed in the chart below, the results revealed that although students themselves do not use a lot of CS in their communication, they favor teachers doing so. The majority of students have a positive attitude regarding teachers' use of CS in the class since it is almost used to clarify things and it let them understand well. This reflects the point that students care a lot about understanding the material so they prefer teachers to switch the code. Besides, it reveals that students do not pay attention to communication as much as they pay to the comprehension of the material.



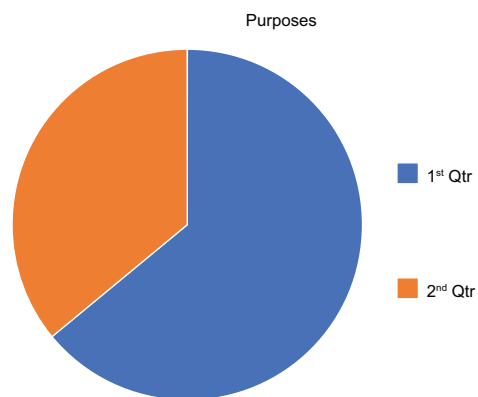
CS and teachers' language proficiency

As mentioned in the previous point, students' aim is to understand the material, no matter how so they keep asking lecturers to switch the code. Therefore, they consider that a lecturer who masters the two languages and he can switch easily as a high-proficient lecturer. Regarding students' viewpoint, he is their savior. Because most respondents believed that lecturers' use of CS demonstrates their high level of expertise, it is evident from the findings displayed below in the chart that students are content with it.



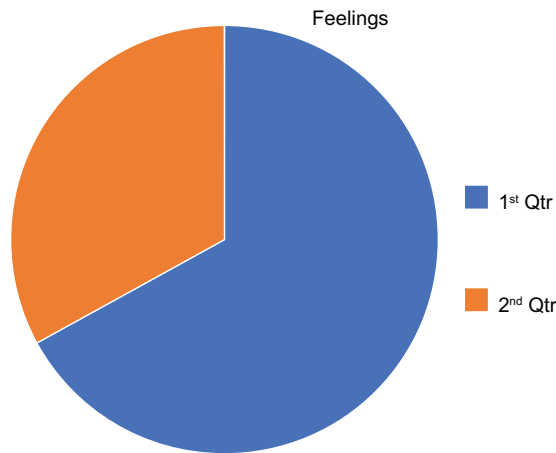
Teachers' purpose of CS

The main function of lecturers' use of the CS is to let students understand since students' main concern is to pass the examination successfully. That's why, as seen below in the chart, around 64% of its use was for rendering the material while 36% was for communication.



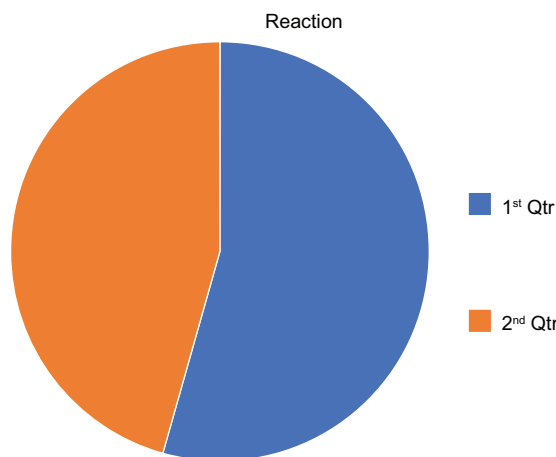
Student's feelings

Generally speaking, when someone speaks the language you speak, this makes you more relaxed. This encourages you to get involved in the atmosphere more. The same is true for students. They feel more relaxed and easygoing when the lecturer uses CS. It urges them to ask more and to perform better. Hence, the results showed that around 67% feel more comfortable whereas 33% feel more dense and bothered as shown below:



Students' preference

Although most of the students prefer lecturers to use CS, but as a last resort. Some lecturers do not do so because they are loaded with a lot of teaching hours. Hence, they use CS instead of keeping simplifying the material. The results displayed that around 46% of students prefer lecturers using CS instead of having lecturers repeating the material in a simplified way, whereas around 54% of students would rather have lecturers using CS as a last resort to enrich students with different vocabulary.

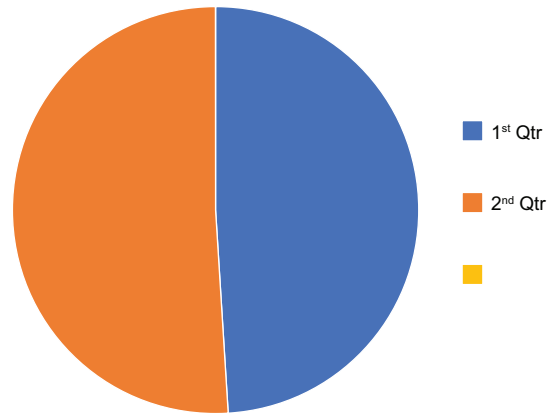


Students' expectations

Regarding the correlation between the use of CS and students' expectation to pass the examination, the questionnaire showed that around 51% of students think positively of CS. They think that if the lecturer switches the

code in the class, this helps them understand well and, as a result, they will make it. On the other hand, around 49% of the students do not think so. Although the difference in the percentages is a little, this reflects the point that there is a tendency among students to learn more and not to switch to their mother tongue whenever they do not understand something.

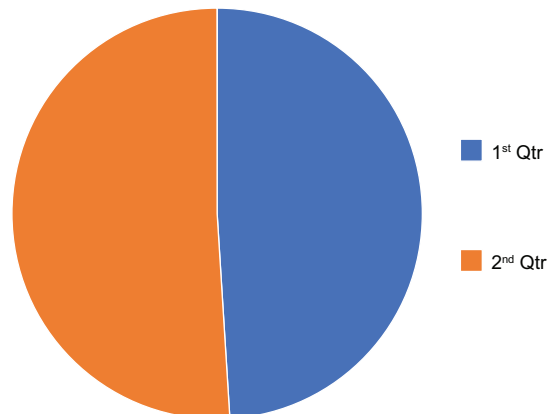
Students' Expectations



CS contribution to the learning process

Regarding CS contribution to the learning process, students showed somehow equality in ranking it. Around 51% of the sample said that it contributes to their comprehension and hence for their development. Since the main goal for most of the students is to get high marks, so they prefer lecturers to switch codes. This may, however, not help them master the language. On the other hand, there is around 49% of the sample showed the opposite. Those think that the best way to learn any foreign language is to practice more, so they prefer lecturers to keep explaining in English to directly switch codes. In this way, they will increase their vocabulary, and they will change their way of thinking. They will stop thinking in their mother tongue, they will think in the English language instead.

CS contribution

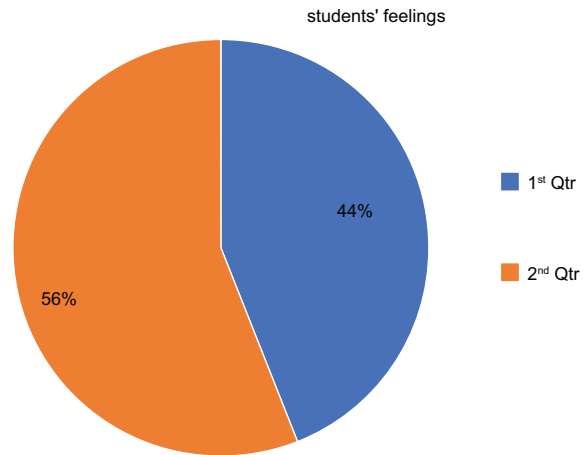
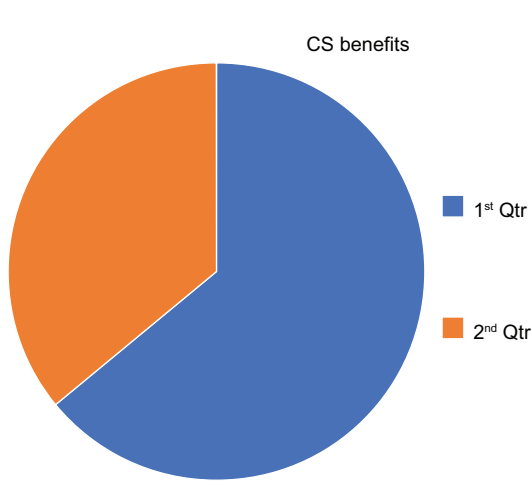


How much beneficial is CS?

According to the questionnaire, around 64% of the sample supported the idea of using CS in the class whereas

around 36% did not. This is somehow in contrast with the previous point. Hence, we can conclude the point that they like lecturers switching the code in the class although they recognize that it is not supporting their learning process. This also confirms the idea that most students are caring about their mark no matter how.

on one code, so they feel distracted. This point is evaluated depending on students' goals. If students' aim is to master a foreign language, they will feel distracted. However, if their aim is to get only a good mark, they will feel more relaxed and focused.

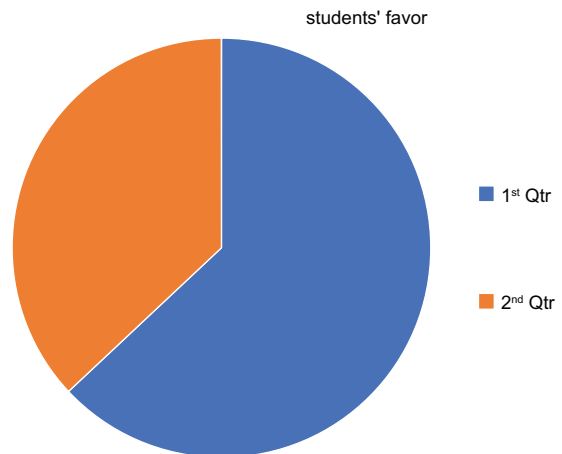
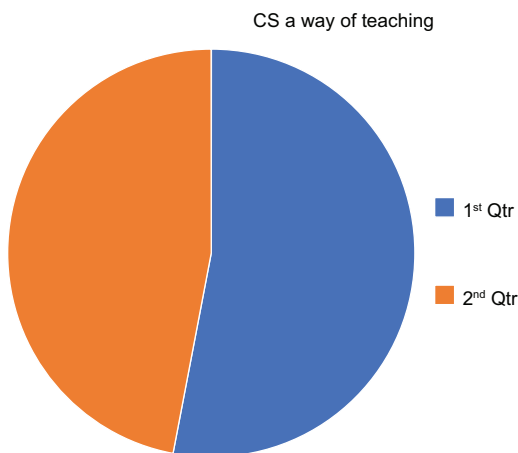


Is CS a new way of teaching?

The students have been asked if they consider CS a new way of teaching. As shown below, around 53% said yes and they are into it a lot, while around 47% of the sample did not agree on that. We can notice that the students have been divided into two groups: Half of them are with and half of them are against. This reflects the idea that half of them are eager to learn and they know that they need to exert efforts, while others would rather the easy way through CS.

Students' favorite

In complement of the previous points, the drastic change of students' answers is quite clear in the chart below. Around 63% of the sample favors their teacher employing CS while around 37% do not. This reflects students' favor of getting high marks.

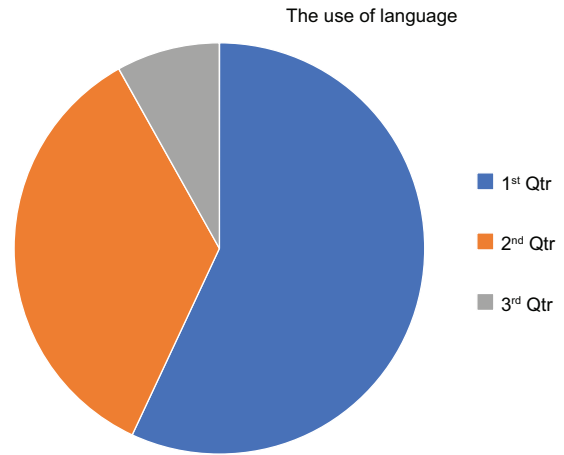
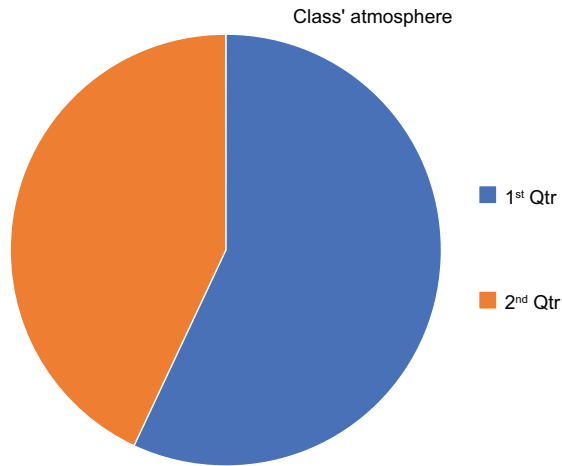


CS effects on students' feelings

As seen in the chart below, most of the students feel more focused when the teacher switches the code, so around 56% of the sample believed that CS is urging them to concentrate more since their mother tongue is used. On the other hand, around 44% of the sample disagrees. They thought that using CS makes them feel lost, and they cannot concentrate

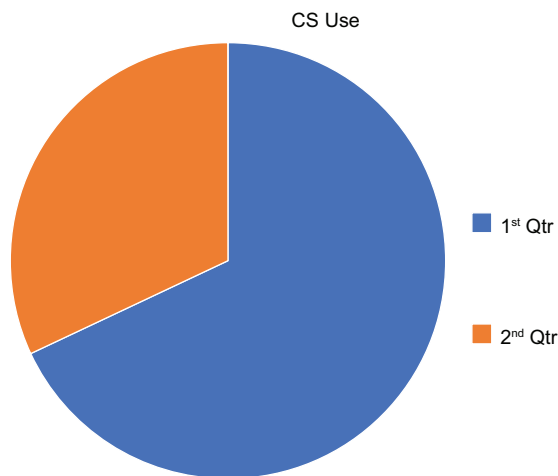
Calss' atmosphere

As displayed in the chart below, around 57% of the students said that the class becomes more enjoyable when the lecturer switches the code since the students will have the chance to take part in the class a lot. On the other hand, around 43% of them said that the class turns boring when the lecturer uses the mother tongue in explaining the lesson. They said so because they have been taught using their mother tongue for 12 years during the primary and secondary schools, so they got saturated of that. It is better to practice the foreign language as much as possible since they could rarely use it outside the class.



Decreasing CS' use in the class

Regarding students' answers, it is quite noticed that students innately do not prefer to have a kind of CS inside the class since the majority confirmed this idea. Around 68% of the sample supported the decrease of the CS while around 32% preferred to have CS to comprehend more. This assures the difference between desire and need. They like to practice the language more but to have a good mark as well.



Which language do you use the most in communication?

Since the majority of students are Kurds so they use the Kurdish language more than English in their daily communication. It is seen in the chart below that around 49% of students do not practice a lot and they prefer to speak in their mother tongue. This could be attributed to the lack of confidence in their English language. On the other hand, around 30% use English a great deal to practice what they learned in the classes. There is another point that should be raised here that there is another group of the sample that speaks Arabic as well. This group constitutes the minority which is about 7%. They would rather speak in Arabic a lot in comparison to English.

B. Observation Analysis

Regarding the observation conducted by the researcher to find out the effects of the CS on the learning process. Regarding the third and fourth stages, the lecturer tends to explain the lesson and all the class activities in English. After a while, the lecturer figures out that some students cannot grasp some points, so he switches the code to explain further. There are some classes, however, that include some Arab students alongside the Kurds. They, therefore, feel bored since they do not understand Kurdish. Besides, those students who have already understood the material might feel bored of over repeating the material. It can be concluded that CS is usually available since some lecturers fail to get students understood and the students welcome such a use. On the other hand, some students do not welcome the excessive use of CS and they create a kind of chaotic atmosphere. This, as a result, might distract the attention of the students in general, and the lecturer looks that he lost the control of the class. The researcher noticed the cons are overbeating its pros.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The present study is meant to report on an investigation of the general situation of CS to Kurdish and sometimes Arabic in Cihan University-Erbil. It finds that CS to Kurdish is a prevalent phenomenon in EFL classrooms at Cihan University-Erbil. More than %70 of students prefer that, and that it has a two-face role in the English learning and teaching process. The study provides a detailed description and analysis of the distributed questionnaire and the results of the observation regarding CS. The results of the questionnaire showed that the majority of students prefer having a kind of CS to comprehend the material well; however, they innately prefer their teachers not to switch the code a lot to practice more. What can be drawn from the observations is contrary to some extent. Those students who have a good command of English feel bored when the lecturer switches the code. They also may cause a chaotic atmosphere that distracts students' attention. However, this was not the case in all the observed classes.

CS can be a useful method for emphasizing the importance of a particular piece of information, whether it be a name, a grammar rule, or an order. One section of the discourse is repeated in L1, highlighting its significance in relation to the rest of the speech. According to what has been said so far, CS may be thought of as a useful technique in classroom interaction, even though many teachers are still unsure about the benefits of doing so when teaching a foreign language, especially if the objective is to efficiently clarify and transmit the information to students.

REFERENCES

- Abbasian, M., & Azeez, I. (2021). The effect of using flipped class on teaching reading comprehension at Cihan university. *Cihan University-Erbil Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(1), 101-105.
- Al-Faris, S., & Jasim, B. (2021). Memory strategies and vocabulary learning strategies: Implications on teaching and learning vocabulary. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies (JHSSS)*, 3(10), 11-21.
- Azlan, N., & Narasuman, S. (2013). The role of code-switching as a communicative tool in an ESL teacher education classroom. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 90(10), 458-467.
- Bensen, H., & Çavuşoğlu, Ç. (2013). Reasons for the teachers' uses of code switching in adult EFL classrooms. *Hasan Ali Yücel Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 20(2), 70-82.
- Blom, J.P., & Gumperz, J. (1972). Social meaning in linguistic structure: Code-switching in Norway. In: Gumperz, J., & Hymes, D., (eds.), *Directions in Sociolinguistics*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Boztepe, E. (2003). *Issues in Code-switching: Competing Theories and Models*. Working Papers in TESOL and Applied Linguistics, 3, 1-27.
- Cromdal, J. (2003). The creation and administration of social relations in bilingual group work. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 24(1), 56-75.
- Gumperz, J.J., & Hernandez-Chavez, H. (1975). Cognitive aspects of bilingual communication. In: Hernandez Chavez, E., Cohen, A., & Beltrano, A., (eds.), *El Lenguaje de los Chicanos: Regional and Social Characteristics of Language used by Mexican Americans*. Arlington, Virginia: Center for Applied Linguistics, p154-164.
- Horasan, S. (2014). Code switching in EFL classrooms and the perceptions of the students and teachers. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 10(1), 31-45.
- Moghadam, S.H., Samad, A., & Shahraki, E. (2012). Code switching as a medium of instructions in an EFL classroom. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(11), 2219-2225.
- Mohammed, P., & Raewf, M. (2018). The content analysis of the research papers on language learning strategies. *Qalaai Zanist Scientific Journal*, 3(4), 904-911.
- Obaidullah, M. (2016). Code switching in EFL classrooms: A Bangladeshi perspective. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 6(5), 924-934.
- Patmasari, A., Agussatriana, M., & Kamaruddin, A. (2022). An investigation of the use of code-switching in EFL classroom: Attitudes and perceptions. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 5(2), 230-239.
- Pica, T. (1994). Research on negotiation: What does it reveal about second-language learning conditions, processes, and outcomes? *Language Learning*, 44(3), 493-527.
- Poplack, S. (1980). Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish Termino En Espanol: toward a typology of code-switching. *Linguistics*, 18(7-8), 581-618.
- Puspawati, I. (2018). Teacher's use of code switching in EFL classroom and its functions. *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning*, 3(1), 2124039.
- Rios, J., & Campos, J. (2013). Code-switching in the EFL classroom: Friend or foe? *Revista de Lenguas Modernas*, 19, 375-391.
- Scotton, C.M., & Ury, W. (1977). Bilingual strategies: The social functions of code-switching. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 13, 5-20.