

Q: What are the benefits of codeswitching and teachers' perceptions of codeswitching in the bilingual classroom? Discuss three benefits of codeswitching by referring to specific studies in the literature.

Codeswitching refers to the act of switching between languages within a single conversation or discourse, whether the switches occur within a sentence or across sentences (Baker, 2001).

Codeswitching in classrooms began to gain attention in bilingual education programs in the United States in the 1970s. This phenomenon then sparked the interest of scholars in other countries, including Canada, South America, Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia. These scholars approached the study of classroom codeswitching from various perspectives, such as conversation analysis, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and ethnography.

During the 1970s, the primary focus of research on classroom codeswitching in bilingual education programs in the United States was on how to allocate time between the two languages used in classroom communication. In the 1980s, researchers in second language acquisition started to pay attention to the phenomenon of codeswitching and began conducting extensive research based on sociolinguistic theories. In a series of studies beginning in the mid-to late-1990s, scholars recognized and supported the use of codeswitching in the classroom. Emphasis began to be placed on the supportive role that appropriate use of the first language (L1) could play for learners of a second language (L2) (Cook, 2001).

In recent years, applied linguists and language teachers have started exploring the phenomenon of language codeswitching from the perspective of second language learning theory and classroom teaching. They believe that codeswitching is not only a manifestation of language activity but also an effective teaching method for second language learning (Sali, 2014; García & Wei, 2014). Adapting to the situation and choosing appropriate codeswitching in the classroom can effectively promote students' learning.

However, teachers may hold different perspectives on codeswitching, with some considering it a positive aid to language acquisition, while others view it as a sign of inadequate language proficiency or a lack of commitment to the language being taught.

This essay aims to explore the benefits of codeswitching and the varying attitudes that teachers may have towards its use in the bilingual classroom. Additionally, three specific benefits of codeswitching based on literature studies will be discussed.

1. The benefits of codeswitching in the bilingual classroom

From a functional perspective, the main purposes of codeswitching in bilingual classrooms are primarily focused on three aspects: classroom content, classroom management, and interpersonal relationships (Ferguson, 2003). Based on this perspective, codeswitching can be beneficial in the following ways:

1.1 Establishing behavioral expectations and norms for students

The use of codeswitching in the bilingual classroom can be a powerful tool for teachers to establish behavioral expectations and norms. According to Sali (2014), the use of the first language by teachers is believed to be effective in conveying authentic emotions, such as anger, frustration, or disappointment, which cannot be as easily expressed in the second language. This, in turn, strengthens the impact of the messages conveyed by teachers.

1.2 Attracting students' attention

In Yao and Zeng's research (2006), for example, if the students became distracted or off-task, the teacher would switch to the students' home language to give instructions or to make announcements. This strategy helped to refocus the students and to redirect their attention back to the lesson. Additionally, the teachers used codeswitching to highlight key points or to emphasize important concepts, which also helped to attract students' attention and to enhance their understanding of the lesson. Overall, the strategic use of codeswitching in this example served as a useful tool for managing classroom behavior and for promoting effective teaching and learning.

1.3 Delivering guidelines and addressing organizational matters

Codeswitching is an effective tool for delivering guidelines and addressing organizational matters in multilingual classrooms. For instance, in a study by Kramsch and Whiteside (2008), university instructors in multilingual classrooms reported using codeswitching to explain course policies and procedures in the students' home language. This helped to ensure that all students were fully informed about the course requirements and expectations, regardless of their level of proficiency in the language of instruction. Additionally, codeswitching was used to provide feedback on assignments and to give instructions for group work and discussions.

1.4 Facilitating communication and verifying students' understanding

Codeswitching can facilitate communication in the bilingual classroom, particularly for students who are not fluent in one language. Swain and Lapkin (2000) suggested that codeswitching could assist with communication by filling in gaps in linguistic abilities. This research indicates that this practice can improve comprehension and ensure that students are following the lesson, especially for students who are still developing their language skills. Besides, teachers can use codeswitching to clarify difficult concepts or ensure that students are following the lesson. For example, if a teacher is teaching a "geometry topic" to students in a math class in English to a group of students who speak Cantonese, the teacher may use codeswitching to explain the complex concept and logic of geometry in Cantonese to ensure that all students understand the topic. By using codeswitching to facilitate communication and verify students' understanding, instructors are able to create a more inclusive learning environment, where all students feel supported and understood.

1.5 Expressing unity and establishing a positive relationship

By employing codeswitching, speakers can show their respect for other languages and cultures, and also demonstrate their ability to navigate bilingual linguistic and cultural contexts. This can help to establish a sense of belonging and mutual understanding between speakers from different linguistic backgrounds. Research has shown that codeswitching can play an important role in creating a

positive classroom environment and promoting language learning. For example, a study also conducted by Yao and Zeng (2006) found that teachers who used codeswitching in their classrooms were able to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, where students felt valued and encouraged to participate.

1.6 Conveying feelings

Codeswitching in bilingual classrooms can serve as a means of expressing emotions in various ways. For instance, a teacher may use codeswitching in the student's first language to express empathy or offer comfort. Additionally, codeswitching can be used to convey emotions such as frustration, disappointment, or anger in a more impactful or emphatic manner, as the teacher can draw on the emotional resonances of the first language (Sali, 2014) and convey more nuanced meanings than would be possible in a single language (Yao and Zeng, 2006). Thus, codeswitching can help teachers to effectively manage their own emotions as well as respond appropriately to the emotions of their students, creating a positive emotional climate in the classroom.

1.7 Promoting second language development

Research indicates that codeswitching can be beneficial for second language acquisition by providing students with exposure to authentic language use. This can be contrasted with more traditional language learning methods that focus on rote memorization and drill-based activities. By engaging in codeswitching activities, students can develop a better understanding of language structure, vocabulary, and pronunciation in a more natural and meaningful way. For example, Cook (2001) confirmed that codeswitching in bilingual classrooms is a learning strategy that can assist language learners in strengthening their second language acquisition, emphasizing the development of the form of the second language and focusing on interactive, meaning-centered approaches that clarify the constituent parts of language structure through negotiated meaning.

1.8 Clarifying cultural references

Codeswitching can indeed be a useful tool for clarifying cultural references in the classroom. For example, in their study on codeswitching in a Chinese EFL

classroom, Yao and Zeng (2006) found that teachers often used codeswitching to explain difficult vocabulary and cultural references to their students. By switching to the students' L1, the teachers were able to ensure that the students fully understood the cultural references being taught and were not hindered by language barriers. They also noted that codeswitching can be a valuable strategy for negotiating cultural differences and creating a sense of inclusion and belonging in multicultural classrooms. By switching between different languages and cultural references, teachers can help students to better understand and appreciate the diversity of perspectives and experiences within their classroom. Similarly, Kramsch and Whiteside (2008) argued that codeswitching can be a powerful tool for promoting symbolic competence, which refers to the ability to use language and cultural knowledge effectively in different contexts.

In brief, codeswitching can play a significant role in managing the classroom, promoting effective communication, second language development, and cultural understanding in the bilingual classroom. Despite the potential benefits, some teachers may perceive codeswitching negatively. In the following part, teachers' perceptions of codeswitching will be discussed.

2. Teachers' perceptions of codeswitching in the bilingual classroom

Experts in teaching methodology have had three different views on the impact of codeswitching in second language learning since the 1960s. The first view is to use a single second language in the classroom. The second view is to maximize the use of the second language, while the third view accepts the use of language codeswitching and advocates for teachers to enhance their awareness of it in teaching (Ellis, 1984; Cook, 2001; Cook, 2003). Similarly, teachers' perceptions of codeswitching in bilingual classrooms can differ based on their language ideologies and beliefs regarding bilingualism.

Some teachers may view codeswitching as a negative practice that hinders students' language development and proficiency in one language. For example, Gallagher's (2017) research found that some teachers perceived codeswitching and other bilingual practices as obstacles and disruptions to effective language learning.

They believe that if teachers use learners' first language to organize classroom teaching or to deliver language knowledge in a second-language classroom, it may deprive students of opportunities to receive input in the second language, and students may focus more on the content expressed by the teacher in the first language, thus ignoring input in the second language. Additionally, some teachers may see codeswitching as a sign of students' inadequate language skills or lack of respect for the dominant language (García & Wei, 2014). Some teachers may also view codeswitching as a sign of laziness or lack of effort on the part of the student, rather than as a useful communication tool. Similarly, Creese and Blackledge (2010) reported that some teachers they investigated perceived codeswitching as a sign of laziness or insufficient language proficiency on the part of the student.

On the contrary, some researchers argue that by overemphasizing negative transfer in language transfer and disregarding the positive transfer of the first language, the principle of using only a single second language significantly limits the possibilities of language teaching and makes it challenging to implement in practice. Teachers who hold a positive attitude towards codeswitching view it as a natural and normal practice that reflects students' multilingual and multicultural identities. They believe that codeswitching is a valuable resource that can enhance students' learning and facilitate communication and understanding in the classroom (García & Wei, 2014; Yao and Zeng, 2006). Furthermore, using the first language as a tool in the classroom is seen as essential for facilitating second language learning, as it helps students absorb and comprehend the target language input. Teachers consider codeswitching an effective strategy for second language teaching. However, it is important to note that during the teaching process, the first language should only be used to assist in the construction of the target language and should not dominate the majority of second language teaching time.

Teachers' perceptions of codeswitching can significantly influence their classroom practices and their students' language learning experiences. They are influenced by various factors, including their own language background and proficiency, their training and professional development, and the policies and

practices of their educational institutions (Karakaya & Dikilitaş, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to critically examine their beliefs and biases and be receptive to diverse perspectives and strategies for bilingual education.

Macaro (2005) emphasized the significance of classroom codeswitching and highlighted the need for further empirical research to deepen our understanding of codeswitching. Based on the literature review, this article will examine three benefits of codeswitching in the bilingual classroom.

3. Three benefits of codeswitching based on literature studies

3.1 Attracting students' attention

A study conducted at a Chinese technical university involved the selection of three English teachers and 113 students. The data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and surveys. The study revealed that in university-level English classes, Mandarin-speaking teachers often use codeswitching, and the characteristics of this codeswitching vary across different classes and classroom segments. The appropriate use of codeswitching by teachers can facilitate teaching tasks and create a positive environment for bilingual learning (Jie, 2019). One of the participant teachers stated that using Mandarin directly in the classroom can make it easier for students to comprehend important content, especially when assigning classroom tasks, explaining teaching requirements, and relaying school notifications.

Furthermore, codeswitching is also used to maintain students' attention. For instance, during the explanation of an English text, some students may struggle to keep up with the target language spoken by the teacher, particularly when discussing the background of the discourse, grammar, and language points. In such cases, teachers may use their mother tongue to bring those students back to the classroom promptly on time. If teachers ignore their students' needs and lecture solely in the target language without using codeswitching to their native language, they risk failing to fulfill their role in the classroom, negatively impacting the effectiveness of teaching and creating negative emotions among students (Kong, 2014).

3.2 Facilitating communication and verifying students' understanding

Huang (2019) conducted a qualitative study that involved observing and analyzing the discourse patterns in three university-level courses taught in English. They also interviewed students and teachers about their experiences in bilingual classroom. The study found that communication played a significant role in facilitating learning and verifying students' understanding. The researchers noted that teachers often used codeswitching and translation to clarify complex concepts and verify students' comprehension. In addition, the study found that students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds had diverse communication styles, which could lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations. The study suggests that teachers should be aware of these differences and encourage communication and collaboration among students. Overall, the study highlights the importance of considering communication and verifying students' understanding in the bilingual classroom and provides pedagogical implications for teachers to enhance learning outcomes.

Similarly, Sali (2014) utilized audio observation and semi-structured interview data to analyze the functions of the L1 in three English classrooms at a Turkish secondary school. The results revealed that L1 served three main functions in classroom discourse, including verifying students' understanding. The data analysis showed that the teachers were using the first language to confirm whether or not the students had understood grammatical explanations.

3.3 Promoting second language development

Liu (2012) explored the use of codeswitching as a tool for developing second language proficiency. The study was conducted in a trilingual classroom in China and used a mixed-methods approach to analyze data from classroom observations and interviews with target students. The study found that codeswitching was an effective tool for developing second language proficiency, particularly in terms of increasing students' confidence and ability to communicate. The students reported that codeswitching helped them to understand difficult concepts and express themselves more fluently. Meanwhile, the author suggests that codeswitching can promote second

language development by providing a bridge between the first and second languages. Similarly, in Gallagher and his colleague's research (2017), he suggested that the L1 can be used to explain difficult concepts or grammar structures, provide examples, or compare and contrast L1 and L2 expressions or structures. By using the L1 in these ways, teachers can help students to better understand the L2 and make connections between their L1 and L2.

Additionally, Zhao's book "Codeswitching" (2012) offers valuable insights into how codeswitching can promote the development of a second language. Zhao discusses how codeswitching can facilitate learning by providing learners with the necessary linguistic and conceptual support to understand new information. He notes that codeswitching can bridge the gap between the learner's first language and the second language being learned by highlighting similarities and differences between the two languages and helping learners make connections between them.

4. Implications for teachers in bilingual classrooms

Teachers need to reflect on their own beliefs and biases, and to consider the potential benefits and challenges of codeswitching in the bilingual classroom. As García and Wei (2014) note, "Teachers need to be aware of the ways how their attitudes and beliefs about language affect the learning opportunities that they provide for their students". By promoting a more inclusive and responsive approach to bilingual education, teachers can create a more supportive and empowering learning environment for all students.

Besides, teachers should carefully plan the frequency and timing of language codeswitching, and appropriately allow learners to use their first language in the classroom under the condition of maximum use of the second language. Systematic codeswitching in the second language classroom, under the control of the teacher, can help students balance the development of language skills between the two languages and achieve their learning goals. Teachers should maintain a balance of language use in each lesson so that codeswitching becomes an effective teaching strategy.

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