

Assignment 2---Jiaqian Wu

by Jiaqian Wu

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1. Title

A Study of Codeswitching in the English Classroom for Tibetan students and the factors behind the use of codeswitching  1

2. The aims of the investigation

- 1.To have some basic information about the use of codeswitching by Tibetan students in English language classroom.
- 2.To explore the reasons why Tibetan students use codeswitching in classroom.
- 3.To investigate the attitudes and perceptions of Tibetan students and English teachers toward the codeswitching in ESL classroom.
- 4.To explore the affective factors that may influence the English study of Tibetan students.
- 5.To investigate the teaching methods adopted by English teachers when they teach Tibetan students.  2

3. The rationale and main conceptual themes for the investigation

When a speaker switches between two or more languages in the context of a single conversation, code-switching (also called language alternation) occurs.  3 Codeswitching is a widespread phenomenon for the bilinguals in their daily conversation. Since 1970s, the codeswitching has become the center of many sociolinguists and psychologists and the studies of codeswitching in a social context was numerous. Then, many researchers started to pay their attention to the codeswitching  4 happened in the classrooms, especially in the ESL classroom. Classroom CS is quite complex because it has some similarities with the CS occurred in a social context, meanwhile, it also has unique characteristics. When students begin to learn English as a second or foreign language, for both teachers and learners, using CS is inevitable or even necessary. Concerning the functions of CS in classroom, as well as teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward CS, many researches have been conducted. In many cases, English is taught as the second language and students mainly acquire L2 based on their first language. However, it is usually not the case of Tibetan students whose mother tongue is Tibetan. For many students in Tibet, mandarin is acquired as the second language. When they begin to study English in the middle school (some of them even firstly get access to English study at college), most of them are fluent bilinguals (Tibetan and mandarin). Besides, due to some historical and social reasons, many English teachers at Tibetan schools can only speak mandarin and English, and mandarin is also the language used in other compulsory courses like mathematics. In addition to this, the English textbooks are usually written in English and mandarin. Therefore, Tibetan students usually study English with mandarin as the medium, and the types of codeswitching among Tibetan students are more diverse, including: mandarin → English, Tibetan→English, Mandarin→Tibetan, English →  5 mandarin, English → Tibetan, Tibetan → mandarin. The CS-related studies in China

are mainly concentrated on students whose first language is mandarin, so the findings of these researches may not applicable for the ESL in Tibetan context.

English education in Tibetan areas is quite special and different compared with that in many other parts of China (but there are many similarities between the English education in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, and that in Tibet, to some extent). Tibet is an inhabited area of many ethnic minorities, and Tibetan nationality occupies the largest proportion of the population. Traditionally, most of them make their living from agriculture and animal husbandry. According to a survey, the agricultural population accounts for as high as 80 percent and they scatter in the vast agricultural and pastoral areas. The population density is very low (1.2 million square kilometers with only about 2.7 million inhabitants), that is less than three people per square kilometer. So, it is difficult to find a appropriate place to establish schools, hoping to cover as many children as possible. About the English learning experience of Tibetan students, there are mainly two types. One refers to students who come from areas with better educational conditions like urban city, and such students have experience of systematical English study, so they are qualified with relatively good proficiency. The other group is those of rural or pasturing areas with poor English. The dilemma is that the former group only takes up a small part of the student population. Besides, due to some preferential policies for the Tibetan students, they can be admitted by universities with a lower score (lower about 150 points), compared with the Han nationality students (Han is the majority nationality in China). Even Tibetan students are enrolled by university, many of them have poor English knowledge. Whereas, the students in many other places of China usually receive English education from primary or middle school continuously. When they attend university, they usually have a good command of English-related abilities. These special and challenging conditions about English instruction in Tibet make the EFL teaching more complicated in Tibet areas and worth exploring. So, I think that choosing “codeswitching in the English Language lesson for Tibetan students and the factors behind the use of codeswitching” as my topic can be quite interesting and may bridge some gap of CS study in China, but this choice is also very challenging considering I could not speak any Tibetan, and the data collection would be more tough.

Regarding the five aims of my investigation, this study would involve some EFL theories about codeswitching, the factors affecting the second language acquisition, various teaching methods, affective filter hypothesis, and Stephen Krashen’s comprehensible input. For example, as I mentioned above, many Tibetan students are low- or intermediate-level learners. For such kinds of students, English teachers usually need to resort to the aids of first language and make their teaching understandable. Just like the Comprehensible Input hypothesis implies, understanding spoken and written language input is seen as the only mechanism that results in the increase of underlying linguistic competence. Teachers usually need to modify their target language output or even switch codes to make teaching content comprehensible. Meanwhile, students would also switch to mandarin or Tibetan to interact with each

other in classrooms. So, when I observe the occurrence of codeswitching and then analyze the data I collect, it is essential to consider the functions of CS in classroom for both teachers and students. Through exploring teachers' and students' attitudes toward CS may reveal some information about their sense of nationality belonging. In addition, the utilization of codeswitching may affect students' perceptions toward English study, and attitude is one of the factors that would exert influence on English instruction and acquisition. Then, I will pay attention to the teaching strategies used by English teachers in Tibetan areas. For example, besides other possible methods, grammar translation and audio-lingual method are most common measures adopted by them. Therefore, exploring the functions of CS in various teaching methods is quite worthy. According to the **affective filter hypothesis** put forward by Stephen Krashen, certain emotions, such as anxiety, self-doubt, and mere boredom interfere with the process of acquiring a second language. These negative feelings can act as a filter between the speaker (teacher) and the listener (student) and probably reduce the amount of language input which is understandable for learners. In other words, these negative emotions prevent efficient processing of the language input. The hypothesis also suggests that through sparking interest, providing low-anxiety environments, and bolstering the learner's self-esteem, the negative influence of the filter can be reduced. And using codeswitching during instruction sometimes could easily achieve these effects.

Background reading

4. A description of the evidence I plan to collect

There is a variety of information I need to observe, collect and analyze, and I could classify the data into three groups: about students (include Tibetan students and Han nationality students in the same class); about English teachers; and the social context in which the survey is conducted.

The necessary information about students involves their attitudes and motivations toward English study, as well as their opinions and reasons about using codeswitching in classroom. In my opinion, attitude and motivation are essential factors affecting foreign language acquisition, meanwhile, they are also affected by students' study background and experience. Firstly, I need to have a general understanding about participants' English proficiency, and the most effective way to get this kind of information is through their test scores. The English exam in China usually only tests learners' reading and writing skills, so students' listening and speaking abilities can only be observed during the class instruction. I hope to find the correlation between codeswitching frequency and their English proficiency, and whether there is a gap between Tibetan students and Han nationality students in English command. Besides, data about their mandarin levels could not be ignored because English is not taught through Tibetan but mandarin, so, it may be an important predictor for their English level.

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Next, I need to explore the possible attitudes owned by participants toward English study and find the possible correlation between it and the use of codeswitching. In this part, with five-points system, I plan to collect information about their interest toward western culture, their opinions about English importance in their future employment or study, and what they want to do with English. For example, what are the benefits of learning English? Is it beneficial for graduating from university and finding a well-paid occupation? Or is it helpful for communication, comprehending English movie or English reading materials? Would they regard it a symbol of being knowledgeable and educated to have a good command of English? Is it possible to promote personal image with fluent English? These kinds of information may be positive ones which are advantageous for the L2 acquisition. On the other hand, the exam-oriented English teaching may impose huge stress on students. Compared with the Han nationality students in the same class, they probably suffer from peer pressure. Some of them may feel frustrated about their slow English progress and low-level oral competence. These things could become the hinder for the L2 learning. Through collecting data on these aspects, I hope to find some potential relationships between learners' attitudes on English and their English proficiency, as well as whether there is a correlation between the attitudes and codeswitching usage.

Then, my concentration would divert to the similarities among the three languages. For example, compared with mandarin, whether there are more similarities between Tibetan and English, such as sentence structure, pronunciation, tense expression, or possessive case of nouns. When students memorize English pronunciation, which language sound marks they would like to use (Tibetan and mandarin have different phonetic symbol systems). Considering the fact that mandarin is almost the medium of English instruction and teacher can only change their languages between English and mandarin, what are students' perceptions toward it (a hinder or aid)? Their codeswitching frequency and the types of codeswitching (there are six types of codeswitching among Tibetan students) could be concluded. I hope to find a correlation among these factors.

Another important section of information I need to collect is about various situations in which students would switch codes. For instance, when students are required to answer the English questions from teachers, which language they prefer to use and the frequency of codeswitching. And teacher's questions can be divided into two types: general questions and Wh-questions. Concerning different types of questions, will their codeswitching choices still be the same or varied. In the classroom, students are usually required to discuss with each other and give their opinions. In such situation, students' codeswitching behaviours would be investigated. That means I need to know which language they would like to use to deal with such situation. Other cases would be like when they need to ask question or when they need to leave the classroom, what are their choice about the language?

Criticality

In addition, students' attitude toward the codeswitching behaviours would be explored. Their attitudes may be varied when they switch to Tibetan or mandarin in the classroom. Whether they feel it a great help when they speak Tibetan or mandarin in English class? Or Will they feel frustrated when they fail to declare themselves in English? Will they worry to disappoint their English teacher due to their low English competence in classroom?

For teachers, I would collect my data through interview. I would ask them questions about the teaching methods they usually adopted in English instruction, and whether they will modify the teaching policy with different English-level students or change it based on the teaching content. Then I will collect some information about their codeswitching during teaching. For instance, will their use of CS vary with different teaching contents, diverse English-level students, or different teaching methods? Next, I will check their perceptions toward students' codeswitching behaviours.

At last, I would consider social context. For example, whether there is a guiding policy (English-only) for the English teaching in Southwest University of Nationalities, if there is one, what it is? Besides, the official language for teaching in this university, the ethnic situation in a class (how many students are there in a class and the percentage of Tibetan students in the class), textbook language, and the possible existence of special requirements for Tibetan students should be taken into account.

5. The methods I plan to use to collect evidence

I plan to collect relevant data mainly by questionnaire, classroom observation and record. I would use a software named SPSS (Statistic Package for Social Science) to analyze the data and get some conclusion about correlation. My research would be conducted in the Tibet college of Southwest University for Nationalities which is located in the downtown of Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan province. I plan to choose sophomore students as my study object and my research would cover students and their English teachers of one or two classes. The students who belong to Han nationality in the classes can speak few Tibetan, will also be taken into account. Concerning the possible different groups of students, I would design two questionnaires, and the questionnaires would refer to "A Questionnaire about the Influence of English Knowledge and Cognitive system toward English Study" (Du Hongbo, 2014). Plus, I plan to use the five-points system in the questionnaire. Using letters from A to E to represent respectively: totally disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, totally agree.

To ensure the reliability and effectiveness of this investigation, I plan to make a pilot study with five Tibetan students and two Han nationality students. According to their feedback, I will modify the question arrangement, questions expressions and diction, and increase or decrease the question contents correspondingly. Before the

participants have the questionnaire, I would introduce the contents and purpose of this investigation. I would state clearly that this study would involve some private information. If they feel uncomfortable or offensive, they can retreat from the survey at any time. The whole research would respect their human rights, religious belief, culture and political stance.  17

The questionnaire would be allocated to sophomores of Tibet college of Southwest University of Nationalities. The first questionnaire is mainly aimed at Tibetan students. At first, some personal information of participants, including name, age, gender, English study experience, score of the latest English test, self-evaluation of their English proficiency, and their evaluation about the difficulty degree of English study, should be understood. In the second part, the attitudes and motivations of Tibetan students toward English learning and their use of codeswitching among Tibetan, mandarin and English, would be investigated. In this part, questions would check five aspects of Tibetan students: an investigation of their study motivation which may enable us to have some insights about their affective factors; an investigation about students' opinions toward the influences of Tibetan and mandarin on English study (positive/negative transfer); learners' usage of codeswitching in English classrooms; the reasons students resort to codeswitching. Among the questions, most are closed questions, but every aspect would allow students to add their own ideas which may not contained in those questions.  18

The second questionnaire is for the Han nationality students in the classroom. Their personal information would be collected in the first part just the same as that of Tibetan students. Next, besides exploring their study attitudes and motivations about English, whether they notice the codeswitching occurring among Tibetan students in classroom and their attitudes and feelings toward the CS phenomenon among Tibetan students would also be surveyed. To be specific, the second part is divided into four sections: investigation about Han nationality students' English study motivation; their observation about the codeswitching occurred in classrooms; their attitudes and feelings toward the utilization of CS by Tibetan classmates; their opinions about the reasons to switch languages. Similarly, every section will have both closed questions and open-ended ones.

Regarding the teachers, I would choose interview. The interview is semi-structured and will cover questions about what teaching methods they usually use in English instruction, whether use codeswitching in classroom, their opinions toward the CS usage by both students and themselves, what is the difference between Tibetan students' CS and that of Han nationality students, what is the possible advantages and disadvantages of using codeswitching in classroom, the reasons of the CS behaviours, and so on. Based on teacher participants' answers, I will modify my questions and dig the aspect that may interest me. When I interview, the whole conversation would be recorded, then turned to transcript and interview report. Those information would be analyzed and categorized.  19 questions of the interview would to some extent

overlap with that of students. So, it is necessary to make some comparison. The conversation during the interviews will be taped and turned into transcript.

On the aspect of classroom observation, I plan to video two classes every month and one and half hours every time. The recording will get the permission of both teachers and students in advance. Considering the fact that I know few Tibetan, so I need some assistants to help me transcript the recording material. Then I will compare the recording material with the findings of interview and questionnaire, to find whether there are something inconsistent or not. At last, the teaching policy of that university would be a reference. In addition to this, the textbooks they use, class size, and teachers' education and working experience would also be taken as reference for this research.

6. A description of the settings in which I plan to collect your evidence.

As I mentioned above, I plan to conduct my research in Tibetan college of Southwest University of Nationalities which is located in the center of Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan province which is adjacent to Tibet. There are many Tibetan people living in Chengdu and many Tibetan students choose to pursue their further study in this University, especially in Tibetan college, quite a large proportion of students come from Tibet. In addition, most students in this college have participated Chinese college entrance examination and passed the enrollment mark. Considering English is one of the compulsory courses in the examination (150 points out of 750 in total), students in this college usually have a certain amount of English knowledge and capabilities. In the University, English is also a compulsory subject that students are required to attend English classes since the first semester of university study. The university English course usually lasts about two to three years, and according some university principles and rules, students cannot graduate without passing a national English exam in China called CET-4. I choose to take sophomore students in Tibetan college as my research object because they are familiar with their classmates, English teachers and teaching process. Even some students without any English learning experience, through one-year study in the university, they probably have **commanded** some English knowledge. Many English teachers in Tibetan college can only speak mandarin and English, but there are quite a lot of teachers of other subjects who can speak both Tibetan and mandarin in this institution, and some are Tibetan themselves. So, I can get necessary assistance from those teachers. At last, the English textbooks they use are Chinese-English bilingual ones.

7. The ethical issues I need to consider

Before conducting my research, I should make sure that my research activities all comply with relevant laws or rules and guarantee the human rights and safety of participants. I will inform my participants (teachers and students) of the purpose, detailed process, and contents of my research, and they can refuse to participate in the

survey activity or retreat from it at any time without any possible punishments or damage.

When I socialize with Tibetan students, there are two points I need to pay attention: one is about religion, the other is related to their culture. On the aspect of religion, I should fully respect their religious belief (Buddhism) and Buddhist culture. It is forbidden to blaspheme the buddha sculpture or touch it without permission. It is also not allowed to take pictures of buddha. When coming across a temple, pagoda, or other Buddhist-related architectures, you had better go around from Left to Right. Then you should use Kha-Btags (a piece of silk used as a greeting gift) appropriately. The Kha-Btags has five colors which symbolize differently: blue (sky), white (cloud), yellow (earth), green (river water), and red (space protector god). The white ones are usually used among friends and family, but the five-colored Kha-Btags is a decoration only belongs to Buddha.  22

Concerning the Tibetan culture, there are some culture taboos we need to pay attention. For example, it is unbearable for Tibetan to eat horseflesh, donkey meat, or dog meat because these animals are regarded as partners for them. When you socialize with Tibetan, you could not touch their head top randomly, and when you handover things to or receive something from them, you had better use both your hands. The last matter needing attention is that it is not proper to spit or clap hands behind Tibetan's back.  23

8. The methods I expect to use to analyse the evidence you collect.

To collect data from teachers and students about codeswitching in English classroom, I plan to use different methods. For students, I collect data by quantitative method (questionnaire with 5-point system). After collecting the questionnaires from students, I would disposal the data and turn it into several tables. In this process, I intend to use descriptive statistic to analyze the data. Regarding teachers, I adopt qualitative method to collect information by interview. I will turn the interview contents into transcript and tables if possible, then use descriptive statistics to analyze the information, too. I may also use the SPSS to get some conclusion and find the possible mutual correlations.

9 The timetable for the proposed project

I may spend about seven months to finish this study.

Step 1: Spend one month to design the whole research, decide the questions of questionnaire and interview.  25

Step 2: Contact the leaders of Tibetan college to get the study permission and necessary assistance. (one month)

Step 3: Spend a week to do the pilot study.

Step 4: Spend two months to observe and record the English instruction, at the same time, allocate questionnaire to students and collect questionnaire back.

Step 5: Spend two months to disposal, transcript, and analyze the data, and get corresponding conclusion.

Step 6: Spend one month to write the research article.

Reference

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Assignment 2---Jiaqian Wu

GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

65 / 100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

This is an excellent assignment, which explores the topic effectively.

You provide an interesting rationale for the study and relate to extensive relevant background reading and your awareness of the EFL module content.

You have succeeded in identifying a key area for further investigation in relation to current practice. This response indicates a level of critical understanding congruent with this level.

The style is coherent and reflective. You have obviously gained a great deal from this module and you are aware of the limitations of a small scale study. Good awareness of the research methodology , clear research questions and awareness

of shortcomings and this is communicated clearly.

You might like to consider:

1. Making further references to the research methods literature. Refer to Punch (2009) and Thomas (2009) as discussed in class..

2. Including more varied research methods

3. Refer in further detail to qualitative data analysis and Ethics..

I enjoyed reading your account. Congratulations and the best of luck with the remainder of your course..

PAGE 1



Comment 1

Interesting choice of topic.



Comment 2

Would the teaching methods be any different?



Comment 3

delete.



Comment 4

tense- happening



Comment 5

can this be stated simply?

PAGE 2



Comment 6

Is all this background detail necessary?



Comment 7

Useful rationale for the proposed study.



Comment 8

Refer to this pedagogic use of CS in more detail.

PAGE 3



Comment 9

Capital letters.



Background reading

Evidence of wide reading



Comment 10

Indeed.

PAGE 4



Comment 11

Write out separate research questions here e.g. RQ1 , RQ2 etc..



Comment 12

How have you identifies these? pilot study?



Criticality

Good ability to be critical and appraise the study's findings to further knowledge and thinking.

PAGE 5



Comment 13

semi-structured interviews?



Comment 14

record of what??



Comment 15

proof reading.



Comment 16

Do you mean the 5 point likert scale?

PAGE 6



Comment 17

You need to include a separate section for Ethics and refer to BERA 2018 guidelines.



Comment 18

proof-reading



Comment 19

How? Give further details.

PAGE 7



Comment 20

Would access be possible?



Comment 21

delete.

PAGE 8



Comment 22

Interesting insight.



Comment 23

Have you researched these beliefs?



Comment 24

Good awareness of research methods.



Comment 25

This information may be better represented in a table?

PAGE 9



Comment 26

Interesting source. How does your proposed study add to this research? Where is the gap in the literature?