THE PERCEPTIONS AND REASONS FOR CODE-SWITCHING OF ARABIC-ENGLISH TEACHERS AND NINETH-GRADE STUDENTS

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the apple of my eye, my mother, who raised, taught, and prepared me to be the man I am today. I am blessed with her love and support and will always be in her debt until the rest of my life. To my Father. And to my brothers who will always be the only ones I can lean on. To my Family.

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ABSTRACT

Code-switching is a global phenomenon among bilingual and multilingual individuals in many different communities. Thus, code-switching in the context of education as one of these communities, especially in ESL and EFL classrooms is said to have different effects on the process of learning and teaching. Some research deemed its negativity, while others praise its benefits. In light of such contradictions, the current study focused on investigating the perceptions and reasons for code-switching of Arabic-English teachers and their ninth-grade students in Johor Bahru, Malaysia. The study was aimed to answer the following research questions: i. What are the reasons for Arabic-English teachers' code-switching in the classroom? ii. What are the perceptions of Arabic-English teachers' code-switching in the classroom? iii. What are the reasons for Arabic-English students' code-switching in the classroom? iv. What are the perceptions of Arabic-English students about their teacher's code-switching in the classroom? A quantitative research design was used for the study. The population included an international Arabic school in JB. The samples are purposefully chosen. 40 selected Arabic students at the ninth grade were available alongside 5 Arabic- English teachers. Data were collected mainly using questionnaires comprising close and open-ended items. Based on the findings, the students are generally having a firm positive overview of code-switching by their teachers. However, it seems as if the teachers have a split decision of using code-switching as a teaching method in their ESL\EFL classrooms. Moreover, it is noticeable that the teachers' code-switching occurs spontaneously and without planning, depending on the learning obstacles that the students encounter while studying and learning English in the classroom. Also, there is a rational sense of awareness between the teachers regarding the negative effect code-switching may have on the students. Hence, teachers would be further advised to monitor their code-switching, and the code-switching of their students, to effectively avoid any negativity that might affect the students' learning process.

ABSTRAK

Peralihan kod adalah fenomena global di kalangan individu dwibahasa dan berbilang bahasa di pelbagai komuniti yang berbeza. Oleh itu, pertukaran kod dalam konteks pendidikan sebagai salah satu komuniti ini, terutama di bilik darjah yang menggunakan bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua dan bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing dikatakan mempunyai kesan yang berbeza terhadap proses pembelajaran dan pengajaran. Beberapa penyelidikan menganggapnya sebagai negatif, sementara yang lain memuji faedahnya. Mengingat percanggahan seperti itu, kajian semasa memfokuskan diri pada menyiasat persepsi dan alasan pertukaran kod guru bahasa Arab-Inggeris dan pelajar kelas tingkatan tiga di Johor Bahru, Malaysia. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menjawab persoalan kajian berikut: i. Apakah sebab-sebab pertukaran kod guru Arab-Inggeris di dalam kelas? ii. Apakah persepsi mengenai pertukaran kod guru Arab-Inggeris di dalam kelas? iii. Apakah sebab-sebab pertukaran kod pelajar Arab-Inggeris di dalam kelas? iv. Apakah persepsi pelajar Arab-Inggeris mengenai pertukaran kod guru mereka di dalam kelas? Reka bentuk penyelidikan kaedah campuran digunakan untuk kajian ini. Penduduknya termasuk sekolah Arab antarabangsa di JB. Sampel dipilih dengan sengaja. 40 pelajar Bahasa Arab kelas tingkatan tiga dipilih bersama 5 orang guru Bahasa Arab-Inggeris. Data dikumpulkan terutamanya menggunakan soal selidik yang terdiri daripada item tertutup dan terbuka. Berdasarkan penemuan tersebut, para pelajar umumnya mempunyai gambaran positif mengenai pertukaran kod oleh guru mereka. Walau bagaimanapun, seolah-olah para guru mempunyai keputusan yang terpisah untuk menggunakan pertukaran kod sebagai kaedah pengajaran di bilik darjah bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua dan bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing. Lebih-lebih lagi, didapati bahawa pertukaran kod guru berlaku secara spontan dan tanpa perancangan, bergantung pada halangan pembelajaran yang dihadapi oleh pelajar semasa belajar dan belajar bahasa Inggeris di dalam kelas. Juga, terdapat rasa kesadaran yang rasional di antara para guru mengenai kesan negatif pengalihan kod terhadap pelajar. Oleh itu, para guru akan lebih disarankan untuk memantau pertukaran kod mereka, dan peralihan kod pelajar mereka, untuk secara efektif menghindari sebarang negatif yang mungkin mempengaruhi proses pembelajaran pelajar.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CS	-	Code-switch
L1	-	First languahe or mother tongue
L2	-	Second language
ESL	-	English as a second language
EFL	-	English as a foreign language
TESL	-	Teaching English as a second Language

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Overview

Code-switching is considered a modern communication method widely used and found in both bilingual and multilingual societies. Such a phenomenon has gradually become an everyday communication habit, especially in multi-racial communities. Language learning classes are among the richest environments for code-switching to thrive and prosper, especially if the learners and the teachers come from the same language background and speak the same mother tongue.

To understand what Code-switching means, we need to break down the term and analyse it. In general, code in communication and information processing refers to a specific rule applied to interpret a piece of information into another representation that may differ from the original one. According to Wardhaugh (2006), the word code means the medium of a communication system used among two or more individuals or parties. For instance, the necessity to invent communicative language between humans to smoothly communicate what they may feel, think, and hear throughout a system of verbal and written symbols, can be referred to as a Code. In sociolinguistics, code refers to language as it is a neutral term describing the medium of communication. This term describes any communication system that includes language and its forms as more comprehensive terminology than various, dialect, or language terms. They have certain specific qualities on their own.

According to Crystal (1990), code is a group of rules to convert one signalling system into another. Hence, a code is a combination of rules that we may use to deliver any information in a symbolic form. Thus, human languages are then considered as some sort of codes; comprising letters, words, and phrases that represent thoughts, objects, and events.

Reflecting upon what has been mentioned above, we can conclude that code can be labelled as a language. It is a shape and form of the language we use in society to communicate with other people. While switching is moving from one point to another or more accurately and according to Walter (2008) in Cambridge dictionary, switch means "a sudden or complete change, especially of one person or thing for another". So, it can be understood that switching as a continuous form of the word switch means the movement back and forth between two things or points. Consequently, the term "code- switching" means shifting from one language to another when it requires doing so. The words "code" and "switch" combined as one present the term code-switching, mostly known as a universal sociolinguistic phenomenon derived from the interaction between bilingual or multilingual speakers. It means the ability to use more than one language in the context of an interactive speech between individuals. The effect of this phenomena has been studied extensively by many scholars to identify and explain its concept.

Code-Switching from Arabic to English and vice versa is one aspect of many others, a common phenomenon among Arab speakers who can speak English fluently. Multiple research types have been conducted on different societies regarding code- switching, and Arabic speaking society is one of them. Numerous findings were reached and concluded regarding the perceptions, the reasons, outcome, structure, and many other aspects of using this phenomenon. However, Arabic-speaking society is broad and consists of different countries, races, people with different accents, cultural backgrounds, and speaking manner.

Accordingly, and after briefly introducing code-switching, the current study examines the phenomenon of code-switching in a specific context, which is code-switching in classrooms and on a particular group of people who speak Arabic as their first language and English as their foreign or second language. An Arabic school in Johor Bahru has been chosen in this study to represent part of the Arabic society to test the reasons and perceptions of code-switching by English-Arabic teachers and their students in the classroom.

1.2 Problem Background

In the past few decades, there has been an outstanding growth and developmentin most societies worldwide. Moving from one place to another, seeking high living standards, education, travel, and even establishing a new business; people were starting to merge and migrate to different parts around the world. As a consequence, different cultures melted down together, forming new multicultural societies. New bilingual and multilingual communities have come to existence. Throughout observing these people who belong to different communities but live together at one place, it has become possible to understand how these individuals use more than one language to communicate and code-switch (House & Rehbein, 2004).

Researchers have investigated code-switching in different formal and informal situations to describe and define the reasons and perceptions of code-switching. It has been found that bilinguals and multilingual may codeswitch for many reasons including but not limited to: emphasis of the identity marker Shin (2010), solidarity marker (Abubakr et al., 2019), motivation, providing feedback, checking understanding, humour, and expressing a state of mind Yulandari (2019). The perceptions and reasons for code-switching in classrooms drastically differ between positive and negativeopinions and feedbacks of teachers and students.

On the one hand, and according to Metila (2009), she finds that code-switching by mathematics teachers negatively affects teaching and learning in the classroom. In the analysis of her research, she states that teachers' method of code-switching had only caused confusion and misunderstanding among students, subsequently affecting their comprehension. In other words, teachers who used less code-switching in their lesson explanation were more successful at delivering the information needed to the students without any disruptions. In the light of such study findings and many more others alike,some teachers are cynical on whether they should or should not tolerate code-switching by their students in the classroom. Accordingly, code-switching in classrooms is folded by negative opinions and opposing views that could affect acquiring and learning new school skills. Likewise, in South Africa, one research was conducted on exploring the attitudes of grade 8 students regarding code-switching in the classroom. The results show that code-switching during classroom sessions led to confusion between students and inferior performance compared to other classes where code-switching is less engaged (Grobler, 2017).

While on the other hand, in many other studies about the reasons and perception of code-switching as a teaching method in classrooms, positive feedbacks and optimistic opinions were expressed. For instance, (Azlan & Narasuman, 2013) study showed that English is the most dominant medium of instruction. However, code-switching was used to explain ideas in certain situations further and enhance solidarity in the first language.

In sum, nowadays, the perceptions and reasons for code-switching are still a hottopic to ponder upon. Hence, this study looked at the reasons and perceptions of code- switching by the teachers and their students at an international Arabic school in Johor Bahru.

1.3   Problem Statement

The integration of code-switching in classrooms is not a new educational method, especially in bilingual and multilingual communities. An increasing number of research papers address the phenomenon of code-switching globally from a different point of views and aspects is on the rise. Reviewing the current and related literature shows that one of the main factors that need extra attention is code-switching in classrooms and what are the perceptions and reasons for it.

Countless studies have investigated the perceptions, reasons, and types of code-switching in an educational setting. Some of these studies looked at bilingual Arabic communities (e.g., Sabti et al., 2019; Amazouz et al., 2018; Ismail, 2015; Bahous et al., 2014). Numerous findings were reached and concluded about the reasons, perceptions,and structure of code-switching. However, such studies have had different opinions and views about code-switching as a method of learning and teaching in an educational context. Some support the use of code-switching in classrooms while others do not. Such inconclusive arguments led the current study to attempt presenting additional evidence on the reasons and perceptions of code-switching by English as a foreign language (EFL) \ English as a second language (ESL) teachers and their students in the classroom setting at an Arabic International School in Johor Bahru.

To conclude, the current study attempts to add more insights and contribution tothe reasons and perceptions of code-switching used in the classroom by the Arabic-English teachers and their students.

1.4   Aim of the Study

After the brief introduction to the topic in hand, we understand that code-switching is considered a strategy deployed by teachers and learners who share the same first language. Such a strategy can ensure the syllabus content's smooth deliverance to facilitate comprehension, especially for low proficiency students. Nonetheless, it is known to be easy for teachers to lose control over their code-switching abilities, making them vulnerable to overuse this strategy. Consequently, leading to adversative effects which in return may hinder the competence development in the targeted language.

Therefore, in both EFL and ESL classrooms, teachers' and students' moderate use of code-switching is essential, but at the same time, it may negatively influence the class's desired outcome. Consequently, slowing down the process of learning.

As a result of what has been mentioned, it is necessary to investigate the teachers and the students' perceptions and reasons for code-switching. This investigation will

Help broaden the scope of understanding how teachers and their students perceive code-switching as a teaching and learning strategy and its implications on the teaching- learning process.

1.4.1   Research Objectives

The current study aims to:

1)   To investigate the reasons for Arabic-English teachers' code-switching in the classroom.

2)   To investigate the perceptions of Arabic-English teachers' code-switching in the classroom.

3)   To investigate the reasons for Arabic speaking students' code-switching during English classroom.

4)   To investigate the perceptions of Arabic speaking students about their teacher's code-switching during English classroom.

1.4.2   Research Questions

The following research questions guide the current study:

1)   What are the reasons for Arabic-English teachers' code-switching in the classroom?

2)   What are the perceptions of Arabic-English teachers' code-switching in the classroom?

3)   What are the reasons for Arabic-English students' code-switching in the classroom?

4)   What are the perceptions of Arabic-English students about their teacher's code- switching in the classroom?

1.5   Scope of the Study

This study covers a total number of forty-five respondents. forty students and five English teachers were purposefully selected for the study. The respondents were taken from an international Arabic School in Johor Bahru, Malaysia. Based on the research methodology, questionnaires with open and close-ended items were used to collect the data. Then the data was analysed and reported statistically after which it was divided into subcategories referring to different classes behind the perceptions and reasons of code-switching. This would help understand code-switching in educational settings. Thus, it extends practical endorsement of analysing and understanding the reasons for code-switching in general. Even though the study can be applied to any bilingual community, it only investigates the perceptions and reasons for code- switching of Arabic-English teachers and their students in an international Arabic school in Johor Bahru.

1.6   Significance of the Study

In this study, the main focus is to understand the perceptions and reasons for code-switching of teachers and their students. This study continues previous investigations by many researchers and follows their footsteps by applying previous knowledge and theories to test a new community. This research may provide some support to the literature, and further help gains a more profound sense of the matter. Additionally, this study is also essential for EFL and ESL teachers in general. It shed some light on code-switching in the classroom settings and its reasons, whether positive or negative. Positive in providing support to help students understand the targeted language, and negative in overusing code-switching, which could deprive learners of smoothly acquiring the needed input.

A few research papers have been done on different Arabic communities in foreign countries such as Iraqis (Kurdish) and Jordanians regarding code-switching in Malaysia (Sardar et al., 2016; AL-Hourani & Afizah, 2013; Al-Hourani, 2016). It is observed from reviewing the literature that code-switching still needs to be further examined within different educational Arabic communities. In Malaysia and especially in Johor Bahru, the Arabic community is one of the most significant bilingual communities. The International Arabic School is mostly meant to foster the children of Arabic international families in Johor and provide them with a suitable environment required for their educational progression.

Therefore, it is believed that this research study's findings could be beneficial to English language teachers, educators, lecturers, learners, students, policymakers, content designers, and all individuals related and connected to learning and teaching English as EFL\ESL. Moreover, this study offers some critical insights into the teachers' and the students' code-switching, whether it can be useful or not when used in the classroom sessions.

1.7   Theoretical Framework

The current study uses one theoretical framework which follows the presented objectives. The theory is briefly explained and justified its suitability below.

1.7.1   Markedness Model

Usually, there is more than one way of language communication in almost every speech, society or community (Myers-Scotton, 1998). Most communities would have at least two different dialects, varieties of languages. Even though not everybody in these communities is in full command over all existing codes and certainly not everyone uses these codes with the same frequency. Generally, when a speech community develops more than one language or variety for communication, social,

cultural, and psychological associations must prioritise code choice. Considering these associations, the use of one particular language over the other is known as one of these two terms in this theory, the marked or the unmarked code choice. Choosing the marked or unmarked code during any given speech context relies entirely on usual community expectations for that interaction type. To simplify the matter, unmarked code choice is what community standards would predict as the regular, daily, and widespread code that the majority speaks in that community. While the marked code choice is the complete opposite, what community standards would not usually predict to be chosen as the expected code of speech in the interaction (Myers-Scotton, 1998).

Thus, the Markedness Model is about the distinction of the marked versus the unmarked code choice as the main theoretical frame to explain any social motivations for choosing one language over another in any given interaction.

In conclusion, the Markedness Model framework is suitable for monitoring and explaining the social reasons for code-switching. Since the current study's main objectives are to investigate code-switching's perceptions and reasons from both teachers and their students' perspectives, the theory is believed to best suits the study.

1.8   Conceptual Framework

Based on the theory and the principles used in the current study, the following conceptual framework was formulated.
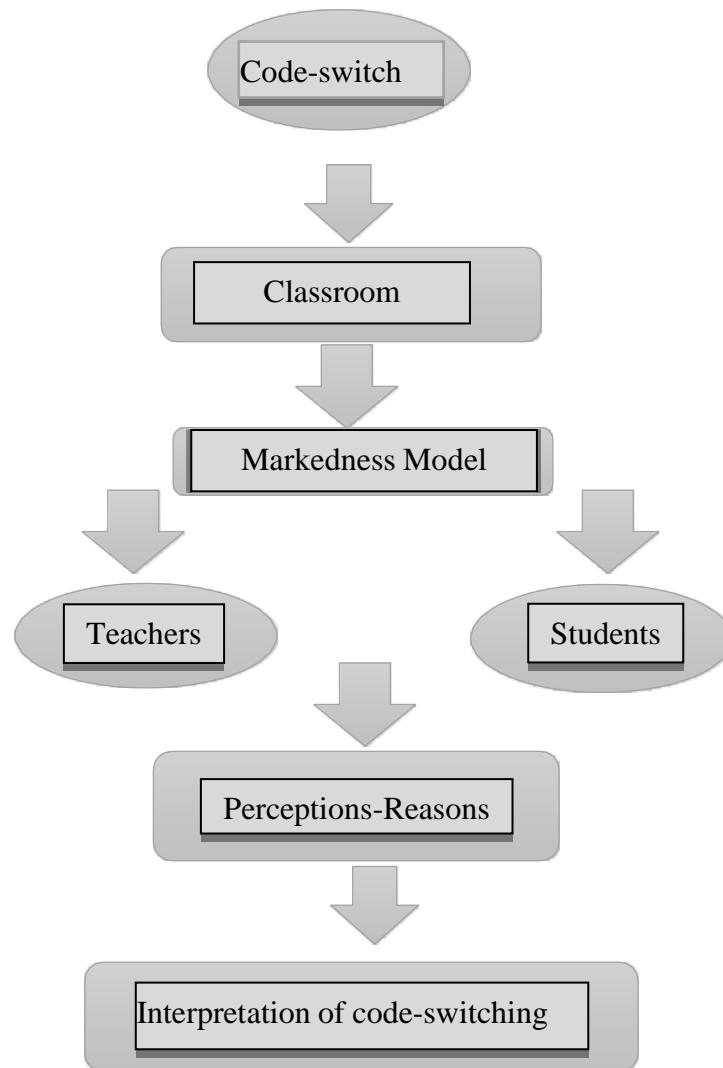
Figure 1.1   Conceptual framework of the study

The diagram in Figure 1.1 illustrates the conceptual framework. To answer the study questions which investigates the reasons for and perceptions of code-switching of Arabic-English teachers and their students. The Markedness Model (Myers-Scotton, 1998) is adopted. The model states that there are different social reasons the speaker wishes to fulfil when choosing one language over another while speaking. Thus, the current conceptual framework acts as a guide to analyse the collected data and investigate code-switching reasons.

1.9   Definition of Concepts

- **Code**

Common terminology used to address any communication system that might include human language. It represents language variety, dialect and register.

- **Code-Switching**

Code-switching refers to the alternation between two or more languages or dialect in the context of the same conversation.

- **Code-Mixing**

Code mixing is similar to code-switching when a bi\multilinguals switch between two or more languages in the context of the same conversation but only withinthe sentence's boundary and not beyond.

- **Perception**

Perception refers to participants' beliefs and personal opinions throughout theirown experiences on a specific issue or topic.

- **Reason**

Reason means the logical justification behind any given action, response, or anevent.

- **Bilingual**

Refers to the ability to use at least two different languages or dialects effectivelyby a person.

- **Multilingual**

Refers to the ability to use more than two languages or dialects effectively by aperson.

- **EFL (English as a Foreign Language)**

It refers to a language learner who learns English while still living in his\her owncountry where the English language is not the community's mother tongue.

- **ESL (English as a Second Language)**

Learning English by learners whose mother tongue is not English, and theyconsidered a non-native English user in an English-speaking society.

- **Speech Community**

It means a group of individuals who share one common tongue, language or dialect.

- **Dialect**

A particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group. It is a form of the language spoken in a particular part of the country or by a particular group of people.

- **Variety**

In sociolinguistics, a variety has a specific name known as lect, which refers to a form of a language including codes, languages, dialects, styles, registers, accents, or any other language forms.

- **L1**

  The mother tongue or the primary language of the community.

- **L2**

  The second language being used by specific community beside their L1

1.10   Conclusion

To sum up, this current first chapter provides a round-up introduction to the research that contains the study's background, positive and negative arguments towards using code-switching in education and classrooms in general. The current chapter also reviews the problem statement and how it is directed to point out the research gap. Besides, the chapter demonstrates the main focus of the study throughout the designated research questions. Moreover, the chapter illustrates the study's scope and how the present research focuses on the perceptions and reasons for code-switching by the Arabic-English teachers and their students at an international Arabic School in Johor Bahru. Finally, the theoretical framework and theoretical concept, which are applied to direct the research inquiries, are illustrated.

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