



Research Article

## The Impact of Limited Code Switching on the Achievement of the Jordanian English Language Learners

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### ABSTRACT

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The study sought to investigate the impact of limited and regulated code switching on the achievement of the Jordanian EFL learners. To achieve the aim of study, the use of code-switching was intended to be integrated within the code of conduct which made up the backbone of the class management.

The study sample consisted of (105) students from the eighth and ninth grades in Berein Secondary School, The Second Directorate of Education in Zarqa District. The subjects were divided into four groups; two experimental groups consisted of (51) male students who were taught through using code-switching. The other two control groups consisted of (52) male students who were taught the same content through the conventional strategy. Questionnaires were distributed into (100) male and female English teachers in different public and private schools to know their attitudes toward using code-switching in their daily lessons in EFL classrooms.

To achieve the goals of this study, the researcher chose both the quantitative design (achievement test) and the qualitative design (interviews and questionnaire) to conduct his study. Analysis of One-Way ANOVA was performed to test the statistical significance of the differences among groups. The results revealed that there was a statistical significant difference at the level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the mean scores between the experimental groups and the control groups in favor of the experimental groups. The result showed that there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the subjects of the experimental groups who were taught through the code of conduct and using the code-switching.

**Key words:** *Code-Switching*, strategies, eighth and ninth grades students, code of conduct and function of code switching.

## Introduction

Teaching of English has greatly emphasized by the Jordanian government through its ministry. However, curriculum learning outcomes document was developed in 2005 for English as a Foreign Language for grades one through twelve. The document gives precise and detailed descriptions of the knowledge and skills students are expected to acquire at each grade. The curriculum is to be used with General Framework: Curriculum and Assessment, which describes the features of the new ERfKE curricula<sup>1</sup>, the Education Reform for Knowledge Economy Project.(Ministry of Education,2013) However, this official document did not discuss to what extent the EFL Jordanian teachers should use their mother tongue language, the Arabic language, inside the classroom. Therefore, this issue opens the floodgates to the English teachers' common beliefs and their misconception about the best use of, each according to his/her discretion.

This study discussed the definition of code switching, positions and reasons behind its usage, the teachers' attitudes toward code switching taking into consideration its misuse by some of the EFL teachers and students according to the researcher's observations inside different EFL classrooms where code-switching is not a random process , but systematic.

The English language has become an integral part in societies like Jordan because it is considered an international language that used among non-native speakers around the globe in order for them to communicate effectively with each other. English in Jordan enjoys a very prestigious status as it's used in different domains of the society like work, school and media. (Abu Hait,2014,P 1)

Bani-Khaled (2012) mentioned that there are already some schools that use English to teach subject studies like the international school and others. The majority of Jordanian elementary school students, study English as their first foreign language at the age of six. By the time they finish their secondary school, they have been studying English for 12 years. English is usually the only one school subject among others which means that students receive approximately the same amount of teaching in English as they do in other subjects.

In a foreign language (EFL) classroom in Jordan, the language of teaching, or supposed to be, is English. However, Arabic is the mother tongue of both English teachers and students, it's very likely that there will be situations during the lessons of an English course where Arabic is used instead of English and where the language changes from English to Arabic and vice versa. (Al-Naimat,2009)

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<sup>1</sup> General Guidelines, General and Specific Outcomes for the English Language Curriculum for the Basic and Secondary Stages. Ministry of Education, Jordan.

## 1.1 Code Switching

Labov 1971 (quoted in Cantone,2007) defines code switching as 'the irregular mixture of two distinct systems, where others argued that 'there are perhaps no syntactic restrictions on where the switching can occur'. The change from one language or variety to another within a stretch of spoken discourse has been very much in the centre of linguistic research in the last few decades. Various labelled code-switching, code-mixing, bilingual speech etc., this linguistic strategy is widely used in multilingual speech communities all over the world. (wright and schendl,2011)

Haugen was one of the first to write about CS, he distinguished between code-Switching on the one hand, in which the character of the contributing varieties is said to be preserved, and interference and integration on the other. A frequently made distinction between code switching and code mixing, the line has been drawn in different ways. Some have reserved code switching for cases where the two codes maintain their monolingual characteristics and used code-mixing for those where there is some convergence between the two. Confusion arises, however, because the two processes often co-exist within the same stretch of discourse as well as overlapping at the conceptual level. Sridhar and Sridhar (1980) and Bokamba (1988) use code-mixing for alternation within the sentence and code-switching for alternations going beyond the sentence borders. Meisel (1989) employs code-mixing for the fusion of two grammatical systems, whereas he describes code-switching as the pragmatic skill of selecting the language according to the interlocutor, topic, context, etc. (Chloros,2009. p.12-13)

As for Bentahila and Davies (1983) the "act of choosing one code rather than another must be distinguished from the act of mixing the two codes together to produce something which might itself be called a third code". It is this second phenomenon that Bentahila et al. refer to as code-switching, that is, "the use of two languages within a single conversation, exchange or utterance". (Bentahila et al. 1983:302)

The early studies were carried out in the United States in bilingual education programmes for linguistic minority children. The 1970s and 1980s saw the development of a substantial body of classroom based research in this particular context. However, since the early 1980s, research on bilingual classroom processes has also been undertaken in other bilingual and multilingual settings such as Canada, South America, Europe, Africa and South East Asia. (Muysken and Milroy,1995,p 90)

In the early studies of classroom of code-switching, there was a tendency to characterize the social meaning of code-switching in terms of two-way choice between an in-group code (a 'we code) and an out-group (they 'code). Whilst the languages used in a bilingual classroom are bound to be associated with different cultural values, it is too simplistic to claim that whenever a bilingual teacher who has the same language background as the learners switches into a shared

code, S/he is invariably expressing solidarity with the learners. Code switching is employed in more subtle and diverse ways in bilingual classroom communication. Teachers and learners exploit code contrast to demarcate different types of discourse, to negotiate and renegotiate joint frames of reference and to exchange meanings on the spur of the moment. (Muysken and Milroy, 1995, p98)

## Functions of code-switching in classrooms

Current research suggest that we should regard code-switching as a systematic process resulting from the interplay of socio-psychological motivations, social norms, and structural –linguistic conditioning; that is to say code-switching is not the accidental outcome of the alternation or the mixing of two languages (Jacobson ,1998). Gumperz (1982: 75-84), relating to conversational code-switching, he suggests a number of conversational functions of code-switching. They are as follows: **quotations, addressee specification, interjections, reiteration, message qualification** and **personalization** versus **objectivization**.

## Types of Code Switching

According to Lipski (1985), types of Code-Switching can be either inter-sentential or intra-sentential. In inter-sentential code-switching, the language switch is done at sentence boundaries. This is seen most often between fluent bilingual speakers. In intra-sentential code-switching, the shift is done in the middle of a sentence, with no interruptions, hesitations, or pauses indicating a shift. The speaker is usually unaware of the switch.

<b>Code-Switching</b>	
<b>Code-Mixing (Mechanical Switching)</b>	<b>Code-Changing</b>
<b>- It's called intra-sentential code-switching.</b>	<b>- It's called inter-sentential code-switching.</b>
<b>-A speaker is momentarily unable to remember a term, but is able to recall it in a different language.</b>	<b>-It is characterized by fluent intra-sentential shifts, transferring focus from one language to another.</b>
<b>-It occurs unconsciously.</b>	<b>-The conscious nature of the switch between two languages is emphasized.</b>
	<b>- The speaker is usually aware of the switch.</b>

## **In Jordan**

When discussing language classrooms, two terms are used to describe them: ESL and EFL classrooms. ESL is an acronym for English as a second language and EFL is an acronym for English as a foreign language (Chaudron 1988: 5). ESL classrooms mean that the second language (L2) serves as both the medium of instruction as well as the content of instruction, which means that the learner is expected to understand as well as communicate in L2. In EFL classrooms, in contrast, the learner learns the language in an environment where there is little natural use of the language; furthermore, the foreign language is treated equally to the other school subjects with its homework and tests. The latter situation applies to Jordan where English is taught as a foreign language.

On the other hand, Myers-Scotton 1988 (p 157) describes codeswitching as the use of two or more languages in the same conversation without a noticeable phonological assimilation from one variety to the other. In general, one can say that a prerequisite for codeswitching is a juxtaposition of elements from two codes (Winford,2003,p 103). Poplack (1980) puts it ‘..intra-sentential switching requires a high level of bilingual proficiency as the speaker needs to know enough of the grammar of both languages to produce grammatically correct utterances’.

However, the situation is a little bit different in Jordan despite of the increasingly developing concern of teaching English where English is a foreign language and taught as a subject among other school subjects. According to what the researcher has mentioned above, the two codes are Arabic language as the mother tongue of the Jordanian learners and the English language as the target language. depending on the previous experience of the researcher who spent 10 years of teaching English in private and public schools ,that’s the reason behind conducting this study in order to document the researcher’s observations on how the English teachers used the English languages and code-switching in their classrooms and discuss the teachers’ views on code-switching.

## **Code of Conduct**

Code of conduct is often known as basic rules at school where the aim of school discipline is to create a safe and happy learning environment in the classroom. The school discipline has two main goals: ensure the safety of staff and students and create an environment conducive to learning. (Mishra ,2007:P 207)

However, never is the student spotlight on the teacher more intensely focused than during the first day and first week of school. For that reason, from the first bell teachers need to model the behavior and general deportment they expect from their students. Behavior is “caught” more than taught. And teachers set the tune (Parsons,2003:p27). The first (or second) day of class is the optimal time to set up a code of conduct for the term, and the students who come already motivated to learn will love you for it (Nilson, 2010 :p 45). The first class meeting offers an ideal opportunity both for welcoming students and for communicating expectations for classroom conventions, such as arriving, leaving and talking in class. The challenge lies in establishing both a pleasant atmosphere and a code of conduct. (Mishra ,2007:P85)

## **Study Problem:**

The teachers of English, in Jordan, highly tend to use the Arabic language in classrooms without any attention to the sensitivity of the issue, neglecting the importance of communicating with students in English language. Therefore, this issue opens the floodgates to the English teachers’ common beliefs and their misconception about the best use of, each according to his/her discretion. Barrera (2001) explained that “Code switching is not arbitrary and indeed doesn’t indicate that the code switcher is changing languages in willy-nilly fashion”. However, this study seeks to investigate the impact of limited and regulated code switching on the achievement of the Jordanian EFL learners.

## **Objectives:**

This study sheds the light on the importance of using limited code switching inside the EFL classroom. Moreover, it guides English language teachers to control their mother tongue language in teaching students English as a foreign language.

## **Study Importance:**

Although numerous studies have been conducted on code switching, the researcher found few of them tackle the relation between the code of conduct and code switching. The code of conduct looks like as a road map for the whole academic year when teacher and his/her students agree on a lot of different things to make learning easier during the year. The findings of this study may help EFL teachers to reduce their use of the mother tongue language in the EFL classroom to the limit. And it organizes the use of first language of the EFL teachers and students and establishes a code of conduct to regulate teaching English inside EFL classrooms. Code switching integrated within the code of conduct can be beneficial in the sense that it can assist teachers of English language for determining of areas they should or shouldn't use the Arabic language.

## **The study question:**

This study seeks to investigate the impact of limited code switching on the achievement of the Jordanian EFL learners.

## **Study Limitations:**

This study has the following limitations

- The study was confined to the eighth and ninth grades students in Berain secondary school in the Second Directorate of Education in Zarqa District.
- The study was carried out in the second semester of the academic year 2015/2016.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **The study followed the empirical approach:**

#### **Sample:**

The sample of the study consisted of (105) students from the eighth and ninth grades in Berein Secondary School, The Second Directorate of Education in Zarqa District. The subjects were divided into four groups. Two experimental groups consisted of (51) male students who were taught through the code of conduct and using code-switching. The other two control groups consisted of (52) male students who were taught the same content through the conventional strategy. Questionnaires were distributed into (100) male and female English teachers in different public and private schools to know their attitudes toward using code-switching in their daily lessons in classrooms.

## Targeted Design

The researcher has chosen both the quantitative design (achievement test) and the qualitative design (interviews and questionnaire) to conduct his study. Yount (2006) stated that there are the pretest-posttest control group design, the Posttest Only Control Group design, and the Solomon Four Group design. However, the researcher decided to utilize the pretest-post-test control group design.

## Tools

Questionnaires, an achievement test, tape recording and interviews

## Procedures

- The code of conduct was printed, framed and posted in the experimental classrooms and in key areas of the school to enable the experimental groups to remember all the time. At the beginning of the semester, the English teacher went over the code with the class on the first day of school and discussed with them conditions, circumstances and constraints of using the Arabic language inside the classroom along with the other rules such as arriving, leaving and preventions of food, drinks and using phones as shown in table 1. Moreover, the experimental groups were observed through fixed cameras and tape recording to check the violations.

**Table 1. CODE OF CONDUCT: ALLOWED AND NOT ALLOWED**

NOT ALLOWED X	ARABIC IS ALLOWED JUST IN THESE CASES √
NO FOOD. X	- <b>Dangerous Situation</b> (someone's life, or any part of his body, is in danger).  - <b>Classroom Management</b> (managing discipline, teacher's commands)  - <b>Content Transmission</b> (vague definition, Grammar explanation, negotiating cultural relevance and parallel translation).
NO DRINKS (EXCEPT WATER). X	
NO PHONES. X	
DON'T USE THE ARABIC LANGUAGE, EXCEPTS IN THESE AREAS:-	

- An achievement test:**

It was designed by the researcher and held for the subjects of this study. It was used as a posttest in order to find out the impact of limited code switching on the achievement of the English language learners in Jordan. The test was modified to suit both grades. The test comprised (50) multiple-choice items each with three answer choices. The test consisted of two questions. The first questions which was concerned with reading comprehension. These sub questions was written carefully to match all levels of students. The second question which was concerned with grammatical structures, pronunciation, vocabulary items and writing skills. The achievement test was not designed to measure accurately a specific curriculum, but rather the knowledge generally

taught at a particular grade level. It required special readiness to choose the correct answer. At the beginning of the test, the instructions of the test were introduced. A panel of judges helped validate the appropriateness of the tested linguistic items, the suitability of the test wording, the suitability of criteria wording. The judges suggested more recommendations regarding the use of language or the criteria of evaluating the answers. All their suggestions were taken into account during revising the criteria of evaluating the test.

The questionnaire: it consisted of ten items that showed teachers' attitudes toward code switching.

## Results

The questionnaire was distributed into (100) male and female English teachers who worked in different public and private schools. Table (2) shows the items of the questionnaire and teachers' responses.

**Table 2. Teachers' Attitudes Toward Code-Switching**

No	Item	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Uncertain %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %
1	I think code switching is enjoyable	12.4	22.2	45.1	13.2	7.1
2	I think that code switching helps both teachers and students.	5.1	64	1.7	27.2	2
3	I think that code switching should be always used in the classroom.	1	20.7	50	26.3	2
4	I think that code switching has a positive impact on English language learning	2.5	32	40	3.3	22.2
5	I believe that translation should be used instead of code switching	5.4	16	26	46	6.6
6	I believe that code switching enhances interaction in the classroom	3.5	70	22	2.3	2.2
7	I believe that code switching increases the speed of learning / teaching English.	4.4	38	35	17	5.6
8	I believe that code switching impedes the students' oral communication.	2.2	60	12.8	22.3	2.7
9	I believe that code switching should be rarely used in the classroom	2	53.4	12.8	29.8	2
10	I believe that code switching should be controlled as far as possible.	3.2	49	4.7	40	3.1



The given table shows the percentage of the teachers' responses for the ten items of the questionnaire. As observed, the highest point was (70%) for item 6, which talked about whether code switching enhance interaction in classroom. Meanwhile, the lowest point was (1%) for the item 3 which have discussed whether code switching should be always used in the classroom. Interestingly, Answers and responses to the ninth statement showed that 53.4 % , and that was a great percentage, of the teachers agreed with using code switching rarely in the EFL classroom, but eventually that was not applicable.

The main question discussed the existence of statistically significant differences at the level ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between the mean scores of students' achievement of the experimental and control groups. Table (3) shows the mean scores and standard deviations among groups.

**Table 3 Mean and Std. Deviation of Both Groups**

Groups	Class	N	Previous Mid-Term Test		Post-test	
			Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control	8 /A	27	127.5185	23.2699383	129.9259	23.9405127
Experimental	8/B	27	129.7778	28.4257918	134.6296	29.1575932
Experimental	9/A	27	132.963	24.0551953	138.3333	23.865005
Control	9/B	27	122.8519	24.7785635	128.3333	22.3072944
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>108</b>					

Means and Standard Deviations were used to detect any differences between the groups in the pretest, as shown in Table (3).

From Table (3), it was clear that the experimental groups who used limited code switching achieved higher scores in the achievement test than the control group who studied through the conventional method. The mean scores of the experimental groups in the achievement test were (134.6296) for 8th grade, class B and (138.3333) for 9th grade, class A. While it was (129.9259) for 8th grade, class A and (128.3333) for 9th grade, class B in the control groups. This indicated that there was a noticeable difference in the students' achievement scores in favor of the experimental group who used limited code-switching integrated with code of conduct.

The previous table shows the changes among the mean scores in the post-test which became higher than the ones in the pretest. The numbers shows an increase in the mean scores which indicates the effect of the integrated code-switching with the code of conduct. Moreover, the scores of standard deviations show also increase among groups.

**Table 4 Results of One-Way ANOVA for the Achievement Test.**

Source of Variance	Sum of squares (SS)	df	Mean squares (MS)	F Calculated	F Tabulated (Sig.)
Between Groups	1678.769	3	559.589	0.89877	2.7
Within Groups (Error)	64752.15	104	622.616		
Total	66430.92				

The given table clearly shows the significance increase among groups. Sig is the actual level of significance and compares with  $\alpha = 0.05$ , if the actual level of significance is greater than ( $\alpha$ ), this of course indicates that the failure to reject the null hypothesis. In Table (4) above, sig value in both cases was equal and more than  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

Table (4), it was obvious that the calculated F which is (0.89877) with sig (2.7) more than 0.05. We concluded that the calculated F was crucial, where the usage of limited code-switching was fruitful. In other words, there were statistically significant differences at level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in favor of the experimental groups.

## Discussion

Different studies discussed the reality of teaching English in the EFL classroom in Jordan, but few tried to focus on the importance of the first day in general and the fruitfulness of the code of conduct to support the students' achievement during the academic year. During the first day, EFL teachers draw the road map to what they want to do through the code of conduct.

The first days of the study were hard. However, students were encouraged to overcome obstacles such as slips of the tongue, jokes and difficulties in finding proper English equivalents. Later on, students in the experimental groups felt excited to be part of the challenge. When comparing the results of this study with other studies' results of the previous related literature, Ahmed (2009) and Abu Hait (2014), we found out that this study was consistent with them. It was consistent with Canagarajah (1995) and Nawafleh (2008) who suggested that one day, the birth of a new pidgin where Arabic is totally mixed with English in Jordan made the process of communication become easier and it is good to live in a bilingual society where people are able to speak more than one language especially for causes such as learning, politics, business and trade.

The given data demonstrated that code switching has affected the proficiency of EFL students, and that was clear in their means scores of the achievement test. At the beginning, students did

not believe in the effect of using limited code switching. Later on, they found out that the first weeks were hard, but useful and fruitful. Interestingly, there were some violations of the code of conduct at the beginning, such as whispers here and there among students, such as expressing personal opinions or emotions but the researcher ignored them and he did not pay attention to them.

It may be suggested that code-switching in language classroom doesn't work always as a deficiency in learning a language, but may be considered as a useful strategy in classroom interaction, if it is conducted in an organized and well- manner. However, code-switching is not an allowance for teachers to use the Arabic language excessively whenever they want to. It should be considered as a strategy and not to be taken as a teaching method. This indicated that using limited code-switching encouraged students to work hard with each other and with their teacher. This strategy enabled the students' ability to elaborate their ideas by giving many helpful details. Students suggested several solutions for different problems.

Foreign language teachers tend to use L1 more frequently to serve a certain number of pedagogic and social functions such as translation, explanation, praise which all contribute to better teacher-student classroom interaction.

## **Conclusion**

There is no better way of practicing the English language with children than by using the code of conduct to consolidate code switching. The code of conduct helped students to know the main areas of using or not using the Arabic language in the school yard in general and in classrooms in specific. Moreover, the researcher found out that English teachers, according to the questionnaire, did not know exactly the overall aspects of using code switching, but was left to their common beliefs and their misconception about the best use of, each according to his/her discretion. The results of the study revealed that there was a positive effect of using limited code switching that integrated with the code of conduct on the achievement of EFL students in Jordan.

## **Suggestions and Recommendations**

The findings showed that this topic is worth studying in EFL classrooms in Jordan. Code-switching is employed in classrooms for varied reasons, those functions being social, discourse and pedagogical. Both the teachers and the pupils employ code-switching. However, the pupils employed it mostly from English to Arabic whereas the teachers employed it in both directions.

The researcher suggests that the English teachers in Jordan, or anywhere the English language is taught as a foreign language, should discuss with their students in advance the importance of using the code of conduct to regulate the limited use of the English language inside EFL

classrooms. Eventually, a plan was formulated and put into action so each English teacher should follow the example. The code should be printed, framed and posted in every classroom and in key areas of the school. At the beginning of the school year, every English teacher should go over the code with the class on the first day of school. And the researcher suggests that the ministry of education in Jordan should currently look for a legislation to regulate the use of Arabic language inside the classroom while teaching the English language and not to be left for English staff's (teachers and supervisors) common beliefs, and their misconception about the perfect use of, each according to his/her discretion.

## Abbreviations

CS: Code Switching.

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

ERfKE : The Education Reform for Knowledge Economy Project.

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