

# Examine the Codeswitching Usage in the Lexical Corpus of Saudi Students at Tertiary Education

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**Abstract:** *The rapid development of internet globally has risen the bilingualism and multilingualism culture, where individuals who speak more than one language engages in alternating use of those languages within a singular conversation. In Saudi Arabia quite distinctly alternating between two languages is seen in the instructor's discourse and the student's interaction in English Language Classrooms. Kustati (2014) said that, Code-Switching help both lecturers and learners to identify the relationship among language culture and education. The study examines the Saudi Students code switching usage of lexical corpus from one language to another language. A non-probability sampling method was applied using selective sampling technique, with a sample of 35 students and 5 Instructors (3 Egyptians and 2 Saudi Instructors). The mixed research design was used. The findings of the study showed that the lexical switching was a natural inevitable process-for the Saudi students as Arabic being the native language (L1), and based on the contextual cognitive requirement to have clarity, and understanding of the target language L2, simultaneously there was a switch within the conversation. Also, it was observed that code switching had negative impact on the output of the learners acquisition of the language.*

**Keywords:** Codeswitching, Lexical Corpus, Native language, Target language, discourse

## 1. Introduction

According to Kustati (2014) Code-Switching help both lecturers and learners to identify the relationship among language culture and education.

*Code-switching is shifting or manipulating one's behaviors to appeal to a different crowd or audience,* "(Durkee, M (2022))

Over the globe with bi and multilingual entrants in foreign language teaching and learning process, code switching has become an experiential phenomenon in the Arab Countries. Researchers of a March 2022 study published in Computer Speech & Language identified code-switching as a multilingual phenomenon, where individuals who speak more than one language can engage in alternating use of those languages within a singular conversation. Code switching has intrigued many scholars over the past decades, Gumperz (1982 p.59), states that, code switching is "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different language/grammatical systems or sub-systems", while Heller (2007) says that code switching is the process of using more than one language in one episode of communication. Further Aranoff and Miller (2003: 523) show that, many linguists have stressed the point that switching between languages is a communicative option available to a bilingual member of a speech community, just as switching between dialects is an option for the monolingual speaker. In this study mixed method approach, which included both qualitative and quantitative method was used to validate the research findings.

In linguistics, code switching refers to people shifting their "code" in specific contexts, depending on who they are speaking to. Holmes (1992) says that code switching happens when speakers shift from one language to another whether it is only one word, utterance, and even one

sentence. Code switching in English Language classroom in Arab countries is the most debated topic. The researcher witnessed at length how the students switch codes-words, sentence, and morphemes from Arabic to English and vice versa and so the facilitators of the second language. In **Tag Code Switching**: switching languages from one word to another. For example: Today is a nice day, نعم؟ (Today is a nice day, Yes?). In **Inter-sentential**-the language switch is done with words or phrases at the beginning or end of a sentence. This type is seen most often in fluent bilingual speakers example-- My father used to say that لا شيء صعب في الحياة (My father used to say that nothing is difficult in life) and In **Intra-sentential** the shift is done in the middle of a sentence, within the same sentence. The speaker is usually unaware of the shift for example: I just don't think اريد ان اصبح teacher anymore (I don't think, I want to become teacher anymore). Apart from these another example of code switching is how Egyptian Instructors use some boundary words like *ama* (but) or *yani* (I mean) while speaking English. Although some researchers address the issue, specifically the use of the native language L1, and the target language is to get advantage from code-switching. According to Macaro, (1997), the switching to L1 necessarily serves some basic functions which may be beneficial in the foreign language learning environment. Most of the work on code-switching has been based on recordings of spontaneous conversation. Until the last decade, these data were more than adequate, as it allowed researchers to find the corpora for information on what occurs, its types, distribution, and communicative functions the code-switching fulfills. The study is just an extension to the previous work, also focusing on the issue of beneficiality of code switching for ESL learners. At Mustaqbal University (English Department), Al Qassim, KSA, the researchers observed that EFL students as well as teachers used code switching considerably. Therefore, the main aim of the study is to "Examine the Codeswitching usage in the Lexical

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**Corpus of Saudi Students at Tertiary Education.** The current study focuses on the following issue:

#### Research Question:

Q1. What is the use of codeswitching in the lexical corpus by EFL learners?

Q2. Why do the ESL learners switch code in their conversation and is it beneficial?

Q3. Why do the ESL Instructors focus on codeswitching in the teaching-learning process in the classroom?

## 2. Literature Review

### 1) Bilingualism

According to Bloomfield (1935, p.56), bilingualism is the ability to use two languages to have “native like control of two languages” Although, as bilingualism intersects with a wide range of disciplines, experts in each have developed definitions of bilingualism that fit their particular research paradigms, research methods, and methods of measurement for testing their hypotheses (Cenoz, 2013). Cook (1991, p.29) suggests that “a use of code switching in the classroom would provide for a bilingual norm whereby code switching is seen to be an acceptable method of communication.” In fact in view of Sebba, Mahootian, and Jonsson (2012, p.68) “code-switching-the alternating use of two (or more) languages-is a natural occurrence in the speech of bilingual individuals”. A similar result is found by Abal Hassan and Alshalawi (2000). in their study, 59.2% of the Saudi bilingual’s code switch because they don’t know the term in Arabic, and 22.6% code switch because they cannot recall the Arabic equivalent term. The bilinguals have varying competencies in the languages they speak, and in which they switch codes is quite evident that the bilinguals competency level in foreign language is lower than that of the native language.

### 2) Code switching

Code switching is when a speaker alternates between two or more languages (or dialects or varieties of language) in one conversation. Code switching is quite common occurrence in bilingual classrooms. Code switching occurs by inserting a lexical word, phrase, and sentence. Milroy and Gordon (2003, p.209) have also argued that “the term ‘code-switching’ can describe a range of language (or dialect) alternation and mixing phenomena whether within the same conversation, the same turn, or the same sentence-utterance”. Whereas Abal Hassan and Alshalawi (2000: 179) found that Saudi graduate students in the United States “mostly used English words inserted into Arabic matrix,” an indication of the influence of native structure on Code Switching words.

### 3) Types of Code switching

Poplack (1980, cited in Hamers, 2000: 259) identifies three types of code switching in terms of what part of a speech act is switched into another language: This happens only when the bilinguals / multilinguals are unable to identify the linguistic preference of the speakers, they experiment different switches as per the particular obligatory rule and apply the one which provides them the best communicative understanding.

- a) Extra sentential code switching which involves the insertion of a tag.
- b) Inter-sentential code switching which involves a switch at clause/sentence boundary. However According to Romane (1989, p112), Tag-switching is phrased as the insertion of words that can be put anywhere with int he boundary of a sentence or speech without violating the grammatical rules of that sentence. Whereas Inter-sentential switching involves “a switch at a clause or sentence boundary”
- c) Intra-sentential code switching which involves switches of different types occurring within the clause boundary, including within the word boundary. In the words (Yletyinen, 2004), Intra-sentential switching occurs when words or phrases from another language are inserted into a sentence of the first language. As per the study of Grosjean (1982) Code switching indicates that it is the utilization of a word, a phrase, a sentence or several sentences of more than one language in a single conversation

### 4) Lexical Corpus

Code switching is a complete set of all words in a language. a subset of words that are grouped by some specific linguistic criteria. For example, English lexis refers to all words of English language. As stated by Poplack (1980: 586), “...code-switches will tend to occur at points in discourse where juxtaposition of L1 and L2 elements does not violate a syntactic rule of either language, i. e., at points around which the surface structures of the two languages map onto each other. CS is dependent on language, a Code-Switching corpus for each dialect is essential in the foreign languages associated with this dialect. It is mostly observed that speakers substitute [b] and [f], respectively especially they substitute English phonemes that do not exist in Arabic for example the closest phoneme to /p/ in Arabic is /b/ Instead of pen they say Ben. Therefore, the oral communication between bilingual speakers is as stated by Auer (1995), “local processes of language negotiation and code selection”. Analyses of the code-switching tend to conclude that they are motivated by lexical need: the base language doesn’t have right word for the thought conveyed perfectly by the foreign word.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

The study employed exploratory, Mixed method research design; both qualitative and quantitative techniques for triangulation purposes were observed. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) set out distinct research designs for mixed methods research. It ‘provides more comprehensive evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone’ and that it ‘helps answer questions that cannot be answered by qualitative or quantitative approaches alone. This method is chosen to provide an overview of code-switching **usage in the Lexical Corpus** hence determining the usage of code switching by students and instructors in the English Language Classroom.

### 3.2 Sample and Sampling

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A non-probability sampling method was applied using selective sampling technique, with a sample of 35 students and 5 Instructors (3 Egyptians and 2 Saudi Instructors).

### 3.3 Statistical tools

The research tools for qualitative analysis were primarily Classroom Observation based on checklist. The Semi Structured Interview which was the most common methods of data collection was the other tool. It is used to explore the views, experiences, beliefs of individual participants. For Quantifying, questionnaires were used, which was designed on 5-point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) which are widely used to measure the opinions.

## 4. Result and Discussion

The findings of the study are based on the data gathered through the following tools: Classroom observation, followed by semi-structured interview and Questionnaire.

**Classroom Observation:** It was quite clear from the observation that Usage of codeswitching in lexical corpus provided clarity and made it comprehensible as stated below. Answering the first and the second research question.

**1. Use of Code switching in the lexical corpus:** The Code switching occurs in everyday speech at words, morphemes sentence and discourse levels. The most frequent observation in the classroom was the Discourse marker switching by the teachers as well as by the EFL learners, in Arabic the most frequently used are *ya 'ni*, it has many literal meaning here-*it means*, (is a preface of tone unit) for example which is seen as subconscious part of speech of the students as well as teachers, second mostly used by the Egyptian instructors was *māši* or *tayyib* (tab/) meaning *ok*. At times students too were observed using it. *Ok* functions as a Confirmation usually used by the speaker to confirm whether listeners have understood the given information. So, without linguistic cues, connections between sentences or utterances, can be ambiguous, which is a major issue in academic discourse. At times the course instructors also use Arabic phrases such as "*Fahmeen*" {you understand. } or "*'anta shayif?*" {(can) you see}, "*wadhih?*" {clear} as to integrating the native language and allowing a platform for learners to respond. a linguistic tool used to confirm that learners are following the lecturer's instruction and explanations of the given lecture. In line with study of Tukinoff (1985) which states that, "*Effective teachers make use of every available resource-- including knowledge of a limited English proficient student's native language-- to ensure that students learn. The purpose of language alternation should be tied to achieving effective instruction*" (pp.19-50). This kind of code switching is usually to bridge the lexical gap as well as at times it brings an unconscious comfort level by the interlocutors.

Another illustration: In English Department one of the Saudi Instructor was checking out the grammar part of the chapter in: "Essay Writing 3" a course in level 8 of undergraduate program. She asked the students to repeat the word. century, one of the student: a slow learner said, teacher, Year *yaanisana* { سنة } (Teacher; Year means *sana*) Here is quite

clear indicative how Repetition was done to align the meanings in the two different languages (i. e. Arabic and English), so that the students in the interaction could gain a better understanding of the words or phrases spoken by the teacher. It was noted that Discourse markers were found to occur frequently with native Arabic lectures, indeed, '*ya3ni*' {mean; meaning}, '*tamam*' {okay}, '*lakin*' {but; however} *Alhamdulillah* {Thank God}, In one of the instance it was seen a student expressing amazement said "*alduktur zayid hu khatib hadha alkitab, I am shocked*", it means "Dr. Zayed is the writer of this book,, I am shocked" here the first clause is in Arabic (insertion of single elements or phrasal entities from one language) (into the morpho-syntactic frame or sentence structure of another language) i. e. English. As rightly said, a bilingual speaker can shift effortlessly between L1 and L2 (Bullock & Toribio 2009) under specific situations and conditions in response to linguistic, psychological, social, or pragmatic factors (Nilep, 2006). Also, to be considered the findings of Masrahi (2016), which revealed that there are learning and social factors beyond code-switching. It was also shown that codeswitching facilitates learning when the students do not have the sufficient lexical and grammatical knowledge. Hence motivated by lexical need: where the base language doesn't have correct linguistic word for the thought conveyed perfectly by the foreign word. . .

**1.1. Use of Inter-sentential code switching in the lexical corpus.** the Head of the English Department is an Egyptian in one of his classroom, as the students had been irregular he lectured them about the rules and regulations saying that "The English department has certain regulations, if you are absent more than 50% than *rah taidd el lavel*. (If you are absent..... than you have to repeat the level. It was also observed that one of the Syrian student speaking to another Arabic student, while motivating her to speak in foreign language while referring to the university said, (*Masalan hum almuealimun waltulaab fi aljamia* who only speak English)-For example there are teachers and students at our university who only speak English. This finding is similar to (Mabule 2015: 345). that the use of Code Switching in the accommodation situation not only enhances communication, but it also provides "the bridging of language separation"

**1.2. Use of Insertional code switching in the lexical corpus:** The embedding of elements from one language into morphological-syntactical structure of the other. The English prepositional phrase is inserted into an Arabic structure it involves one lexical unit. One of the student was conversing with other student telling-After the midterm result of Introduction to computational Linguistics, "*Mashit in state of surprise liawmayn*:-I walked in a state of surprise for two days. In one context the students said that, In comparison to other places, *almamlakat alearabiati alsueudiat kanat* a very closed culture. Saudi Arabia was a very closed culture. Here it is clearly indicated that in the Intra sentential the constituent is a syntactic unit; a lexical-nominal phrase consisting of noun and an adjective. Another example 'The room is hot; please, bring the A. C remote (*al room haar*, please *ahdur al A. C. remote*). Therefore, some scholars think that intra-sentential code switching can help to explore the cognitive structure of the Code Switching (Zirker, 2007).

**2. ESL learners switch code in their conversation:** The analysis was based initially on the data gathered from classroom observation of communication among students. This was helpful to identify the instances of code switching which were analyzed using Poplack's (1980) categories of the type of (intra-sentential, inter-sentential and tag) code switching. Inter-sentential code switching was used more than the others, when the students wanted to explain or translate something while answering or communicating with the teachers and among themselves. It is interesting to note that most of code-switching takes place automatically and unconsciously (Skiba, 1997; Sert, 2005; Jingxia, 2010). For example, "Today *inshallah* {God Willing} we shall finish this topic". The code switched occurs between sentences, and clauses. On the other hand the most outstanding result was English indeed used as the medium of instruction and understanding, some students had a tendency to switch to Arabic when they were unable to decipher as what's been instructed in the classroom, so the teacher as well as other students, to make them understand, to give examples, translated using code switching between sentences and clauses. For example (*hiyyaka: thathalkitab. How nice!*) she is the writer of this book, how nice here the intra-sentential code switching is quite evident which involves the "insertion of phrasal entities from one language into the morpho-syntactic frame or sentence structure of another language". However, code switching in this case provides learners with adequate knowledge of the two languages for them to derive grammatical and lexical information also contributes to the accumulation of theoretical learning. According to Skiba (1997) based on the behaviorist theory-even though code-switching may cause discomfort to the listeners, "it does provide an opportunity for language development".

**Semi structured Interview:** It was conducted for both teachers as well as students, it was based on the second and third research questions. The Responses gathered for the first interview question-Do you Code switch? From the Given table 1 its quite evident the students code switch.

Table 1 CODESWITCH	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
No	12.00	3	1.000
sometime	17.50	2	.707
Yes	18.63	30	10.902
Total	18.00	35	10.247

Out of 35 students N=30 students agreed to the fact they code switch, so the majority gave a positive response about code switching in ESL classroom.

**2<sup>nd</sup> interview question Why do you code switch and how much beneficial is it?** Learner Respondent (LR) 11 said that although she does not code switch but to understand properly from target language many of the classmates' code switch she also emphasized that one of the subject the teacher code switch to give clarity but actually that is not beneficial as when it comes to writing as students we are on loss of vocabulary and sentence structuring and to this 96% of L R agreed to her and one of the Learners also said *it motivates them and builds the confidence level in ESL classroom but as non-native speakers we comprehend but when we have to explain in target language we considerably don't perform as per expectation. LR 15 said that "We code*

*switch to grasp the content and for better comprehending the target language.* 6% of the respondent said that *no doubt sometime it should be used as it helps in learning process but not frequently as it will make us loose our grasp on learning the second language.* Jingxia (2010) studies are in line "that a majority of the students perceived that code switching should either be sometimes or occasionally used in classroom settings".

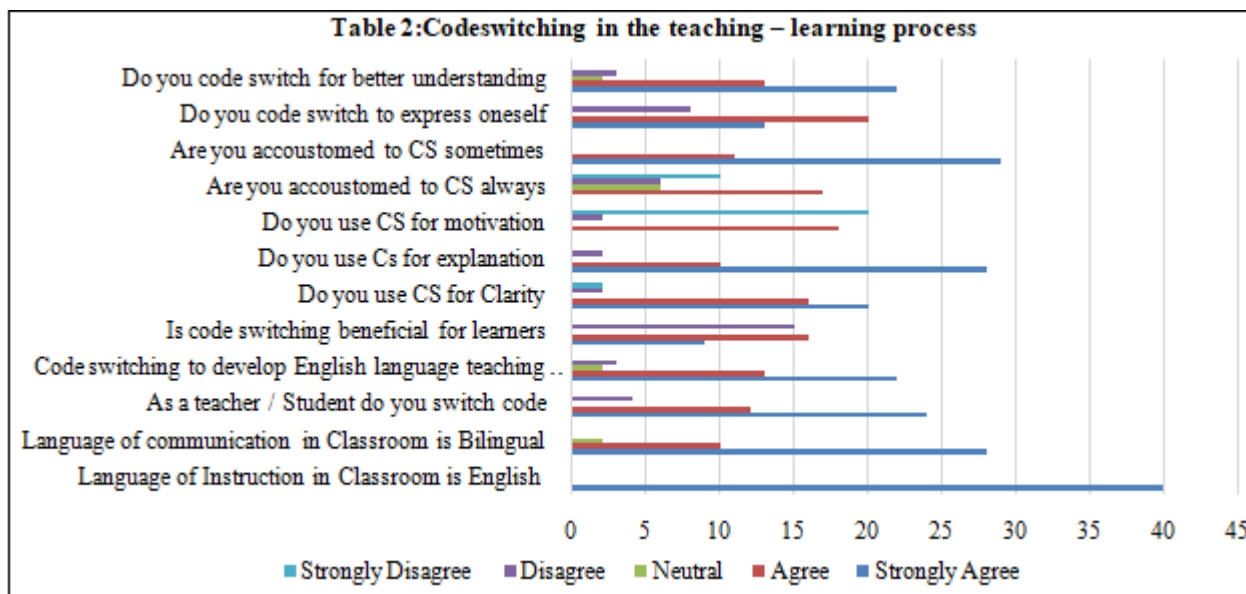
The teachers (T) Responses were quite similar to the students as one of the interviewees (T2) explained, "When I communicate in the class, I try to make myself as clear as possible to get my message across. As English is not my native language and I come from Egypt having mother tongue influence, and while instruction is given to bilingual students I at times use tag questions? and sometimes follow the intra-sentential this is done to avoid confusion and misunderstanding." As said by Crystal (2008), that in linguistics a tag refers to question structure attached to the end of statement. T3 and T4 (Saudi Teachers) interviewees said usually they during content delivery use all the types of code switching unknowingly to enhance their understanding on specific points, guiding the students to follow up for example T3 always have an habit of saying *That's what I meant, Tayeb!* (That's what I meant. All right) and both the teachers also said that its effective for the students to achieve the lessons objective. Apart from this they also said to emphasize on a particular word or a phrase, to intervene in a group discussion, reinforcing a request they do code switching. T3 also said that at times for vocabulary where many students don't understand she does code switching.

T1 said teaching Phonology, Linguistics or Language acquisition he usually does so, as *English alphabet has 20 consonants creating 24 consonant phonemes while the six vowels (including y) can create 22 vowel phonemes, whereas Arabic only has eight vowel phonemes and 28 consonant phonemes.* With this kind of phonological difference like one of the most common issues for Arab speakers is differentiating between the sound /p/ and /b/, which are voiced and voiceless sounds. Although they can pronounce /b/ successfully as it exists in Arabic, but the aspirated /p/ does not exist in Arabic. Hence by code switching is adapted. T1 further emphasized that "If teaching is done completely in Target language will actually be quite good", giving reference to teachers who are not Arabic speakers and same students performance in their courses is exemplary. These findings show students & teachers use Code Switching for pedagogical and social communication purposes of Adriosh & Razi (2019), Zainil & Arsyad (2021). Whereas most of the instructors and students also pointed that although code switching is good but not beneficial in terms of having a complete cognitive understanding of the target language.

**Questionnaire:** It was designed on 5-point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) widely used to measure the opinions on the ESL Instructors focus on codeswitching in the teaching-learning process in the classroom. In language teaching and learning process in the classroom, many contemporary researches have also shown that codeswitching offers many pedagogical benefits, increasing learners' access to content, as well as improving

their participation and engagement (Daniel et al, 2019; Wang, 2019). Although the study has shown various reasons why learners code-switch, but one of the most common reason is its ability to understand to a greater extent the content. The responses gathered from the questionnaire as in Table 2: (*Codeswitching in teaching learning process*) it was quite evident that irrespective to the fact that 100% of the

participants strongly agreed that the medium of Instruction in the ESL classroom was English.70% of the Responses strongly agreed, whereas 25 % agreed that language of communication in classroom is bilingual, on one hand 43% agreed, while 3% strongly disagreed to the item-usually code switching. On the other-hand 73% strongly agreed and 27% agreed to-sometimes code switching.



The table 2 gives a clear indication that to the maximum extent the respondents Strongly agree as well as agree for explanation, motivation, clarity or to develop the language-code switching was used in the classroom. This finding is in line with the findings of Shinga and Pillay (2021). ESL teachers consistently code-switch to clarify difficult concepts and enhance understanding of the content.

Further, a very interesting finding which was quite a contrast to the result of the other items of the questionnaire was noted. The Item-Is code switching beneficial to learners.40% agreed, 23% strongly agreed whereas 37% disagreed, similar responses were seen while in semi-structured interview too. However, there is no doubt while in oral communication using as a pedagogical strategy, code switching enhances learners understanding but at performance level its reflection in terms of output is quite opposite. This finding was supported by previous study of Al-Hourani & Afiza (2013), which said that EFL teachers do not focus on the use of target language in the class most of the time, and this results in poor communicative skills of the students. Although code-switching is helpful in certain situations in the classroom, but it has negative impact on the students' communication and learning the target language. Few more studies are in line with this research finding that Code Switching could affect the students' language proficiency and their confidence in speaking English (Aljoundi 2013; Mokgwathi & Webb 2013). In the similar context Mahdi & Almalki (2019) in their findings explored that students' attitudes towards code-switching in Saudi EFL classroom were negative. Most of the students did not support the use of L1 in EFL classroom.

In contrast and as perceived by many scholars for code switching and its usage in teaching learning process, most of

the studies reflect that code switching is a constructive attempt in the EFL classroom. Like the findings of Alsied (2018) stated that using L1 in English classrooms does not have any negative influence on both teachers and students. He further said that using learners' first language can be used as a tool to aid the students to learn a foreign language in an effective and useful way. Furthermore, Adriosh's & Razi's (2019) findings showed that the students' attitudes and responses were positive towards the use of teachers' code-switching. Zainil & Arsyad, (2021). Study revealed that managing code-switching in the EFL classroom, especially in the beginning EFL classroom could be incorporated as a component of classroom interactional competence.

Although Code switching in EFL class is still a controversial issue. The teaching and learning process dependency on L1 should be minimized, as in Saudi Arabia learner's fluency in the target language is still in the intermediate stage of proficiency as English is not their native language. If the Instructors frequently code switch, the output that is the performance of the student indeed will be affected in terms of accurate lexical acquisition of the target language. Furthermore, the reason for studying the English course will not be of any benefit as it will affect the learner's performance in the future endeavors.

### 5. Conclusion

Overall, the findings of the study were able to ratify predictive explanations in the classroom was the discourse marker switching by the teachers as well as by the EFL learners, where the lexical switching was an inevitable process.-for the Saudi students as Arabic being the native language (L1) and based on the contextual cognitive

requirement to have clarity, and understanding of the target language L2, simultaneously there was a switch within the conversation. Repetition was done to align the meanings in the two different languages (i. e. Arabic and English), so that the students gain a better understanding of the words or phrases. Motivated by lexical need: where the base language doesn't have correct linguistic word for the thought conveyed perfectly by the foreign word. The further inferences drawn from the classroom observation, Interview as well as questionnaire was that unknowingly all the types of code-switching tag switching, inter-sentential switching, and intra-sentential switching were predominant in teaching learning process. It was implemented in the classroom for explanation, clarity, (to enhance the understanding of specific points, vocabulary, particular word or phrase) also it was used for motivation hence by to grasp the content and for better understanding of the target language.

There were few concerns shown by learners as well as some Arabic teachers who found that code switching had adverse impact on the output of the learners' acquisition of the language. Although they were in favor of code-switching usage in the lexical corpus in the teaching learning process but not frequently as it will loosen the learners grasp of comprehending the second language as well as their performance will be affected in long run. However, according to Rukh et al. (2014), students who are majoring in English prefer the usage of L2 only in the classrooms and have negative attitudes toward code-switching. Whereas, Alsufayan (2021) in a study conducted in EFL classrooms at a Saudi university, showed students positive attitude towards using Arabic in their foreign language classrooms but in a limited way and for certain functions only. However, when a bilingual or multilingual speaker tries to speak in one of the languages, "the lexical elements of both L1 and L2 are stimulated in the long-term memory" (Adriosh & Razi, 2019, p.3). Finally, the contrastive perceptions can be considered until unless it does not affect the process of achieving the goal, by implementing to a large extent the use of target language and keeping a balance of the usage of code switching.

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