

# **An Exploration of Saudi English Language Teachers Actual Use of Classroom Management Function of Code-switching (CS) in English-as-a-Foreign-Language Classrooms in Saudi Schools**

*Mohammed Hassan Alshaikhi*  
(Institute of Education, University of Reading, UK)

**Abstract:** This paper aims to explore how the Saudi English language (EL) teachers used the classroom management function of Code-Switching (CS) by switching between first language Arabic (L1) and English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) in EFL classrooms in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia). The study is based on data collected from a small-scale case study of CS, which utilises three observations for each of the four Saudi EL teachers. The results showed evidence that the use of classroom management function is a productive way for English teachers to check their students' understanding and to control their students' behaviour.

**Key words:** Arabic language, code-switching (CS), English language, language teaching, teachers' attitudes

## **1. Introduction**

There has been a great deal of debate within the study of the role of Code-Switching (CS) in Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. CS is a common phenomenon of language contact in bilingual and multilingual societies. It is defined as “the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation” (Muysken, 1995, p. 7). CS can involve a word, a phrase, a sentence, or several sentences. Bullock and Toribio (2009) point out that the popularity of studying CS has increased dramatically over the past century, or more accurately, since the early 1950s. The study of CS progressed quickly and, by the late 1980s, it arguably dominated linguistics due to the interest in bilingualism. This study aims to investigate how the Saudi English language (EL) teachers' actual uses of the classroom management function of CS by switching between L1 and EFL in EFL classrooms in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). During the classroom observations, the teachers used different functions and occurrences of CS but the focus was on only one function; classroom management. Thus, this function will be discussed in the current study in detail. In this present study EFL and L2 will be used interchangeably as one.

## **2 Function of Classroom management of Code-Switching in L2/EFL Classrooms**

A number of studies have examined the role of CS in classroom management through using L1 in L2

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Mohammed Hassan Alshaikhi, Ph.D. in Education, Institute of Education, University of Reading; research areas/interests: second language acquisition, education technology, bilingualism and English for specific purposes. E-mail: [M.H.I.Alshaikhi@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:M.H.I.Alshaikhi@pgr.reading.ac.uk).

classrooms. One of these studies is from Nation (2003) who points out that CS to L1 is a useful means of giving clear instructions and clarifying exam structures in L2 classrooms. It can also do a great deal for L2 teachers to maintain students' discipline and to reprimand their misbehaviour. The strategy of CS between L1 and L2 can be a useful way for L2 teachers to prepare and to motivate their students to start learning the target language, and to actively increase their cognitive input. Classroom management can be divided into three parts: discipline, reprimand, and explaining classrooms instructions. While separated for the purpose of clarity, these three aspects are closely intertwined, as will be seen.

## **2.1 Discipline**

Several studies have examined the impact of CS to L1 to control students' behaviour. Perego and Boyle (2000), Myers-Scotton (1993) and Probyn (2009) point out that CS to L1 for classroom management can be a strong means of controlling students' behaviour, polishing their politeness and encouraging them to pay more attention to lessons so as to gain a better understanding of the subject materials. For example, a teacher could deal with a student disrupting an English lesson by CS to L1 to make the student take the teacher's warning seriously regarding absence, truancy or lateness. In contrast, Moodley (2007) argues that using L2 in L2 classrooms can be used constantly to control the classroom and to maintain students' discipline in order to show respect to teachers and to encourage participation with peers in classrooms, although CS to L1 is also a reliable way for teachers to become more serious. There are some examples among L2 teachers and students in L2 classrooms of using CS to L1 in order to control students' behaviour and to urge them to take part in class. These examples are provided by Uys and Dulm (2011, p.74) and refer to CS between L1 (Afrikaans and Zulu) and L2 (English):

A teacher: Are you saying that cash flow is the change?

Student A: Jakes, gee my pen of ek vat jou boek. (To another student)

(Jakes, give me my pen or I'll take your book.)

A teacher: Hayi, hayi, sanulwenza mamelani njalo. (No, no, don't do that. Pay attention.) (The class becomes quiet.)

In this way, we see CS being used effectively to enforce class discipline and to pay attention to the lesson as well as to be quiet. Based on the example above, discipline can be controlled when a teacher becomes more serious in misbehaviour or disrespect situations by students.

## **2.2 Reprimand**

A number of researchers support Curran's theory (2003) that CS from L1 to L2 is an important strategy for classroom management in order to rebuke and to reprimand students when they misbehave or make noise in class. It can also be a means of urging them to participate effectively in L2 classes. Phillipson (1992) assert that CS to L1 is used as a tool to help instructors to warn or to reprimand students over misbehaviour and their attitudes towards their teachers or peers in the classroom. This idea is supported by Cook (2001), who claims that CS to L1 by L2 teachers can be an inappropriate strategy to train students to behave properly or to maintain and to shape students' discipline. For example, when a teacher wants to send out a serious warning, he or she should say it by using L1 in order to show serious threat or warn towards students' misbehaviour. Some examples are provided by Uys and Dulm (2011, p. 74) which refer to CS between L1 (Afrikaans language) and L2 (English). The teacher switched to L1 to deal with the disruption among students:

A teacher: Can you tell me which the six steps are in the inflation cycle?

Student A: Kan ek maar antwoord, Meneer. (May I answer the question, sir?)

A teacher: Yes, start with number one. Give now another person a chance to answer. Student B: Meneer, ek soek ook 'n kans (Sir, I also want a chance to answer).

Not only is CS being used here to reprimand students towards their misbehaviour in the classroom, but the use of the L1 makes the reprimand more serious and effective as well as enforce students to engage in the classroom efficiently may due to the serious warning and consequences. Based on the example above, it shows that the use of reprimand by the teacher allows the students to recognise their mistakes and misbehaviour when they want to participate randomly.

### **2.3 Explaining Classrooms Instructions**

A number of studies have examined the role of CS to L1 in order to explain classroom instructions and to regulate students' understanding of exam and tasks instructions. Sampson (2011) points out that CS to L1 can help L2 teachers to minimise or to remove failures in tests among students which may be due to lack of students' knowledge of the instructions, and therefore CS to L1 can be used as an important tool to clarify these issues and to enable students to understand what they have been asked to do. Such research questions the significance of the use of L2 in order to explain instructions. What is needed is an examination and assessment of the impact of using L2 in English classrooms for giving instruction. This strategy was the approach of the thorough research carried out by Jake and Gross (2002) who claim that it is more useful when L2 is engaged in the L2 classrooms to clarify instructions. Since this study, however, few follow-up studies have been done.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Questions**

The main research questions raised in this study are: (1) what is the role of classroom management function of CS between L1 (Arabic) and EFL (English) in EFL classrooms in Jeddah?. The four EFL teachers and the teaching process were studied by visiting the settings and collecting information personally in order to obtain a better understanding through classroom observations.

### **3.2 Participants and Schools**

This research examined male Saudi English teachers who teach male students aged 18 years old at two state secondary schools in Jeddah, KSA. There were 30 students in each classroom. The social class of both teachers and students were between middle and upper middle classes. The research was collected through a classroom observation of four EFL teachers, all of whom are Saudi and Arabic native speakers. The teaching experiences of the teachers were between 6 and 9 years. The two secondary schools were chosen randomly through other 13 schools which they had relatively similar facilities and high levels of achievement. There was no way regarding choosing the students because these schools generally had very good level of achievements. English is expected to be used as the medium of instruction during EFL lessons. However, the number of participants and the number of the observations were limited to capture a high picture of the role of classroom management function of CS. Another limitation is that the study only focused on the teachers but did not attempt to explore the students' views.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

Qualitative data were collected through 12 classroom observations, utilising video and audio recordings in English language lessons. Each teacher was observed three times and each observation lasted for 45.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion: CS in EFL Classrooms in KSA

Due to the limit of word counts, an example of the similar responses of teachers and the significant results for each function will be given. During the three instances of classroom observations for each class, there was a wide variation in CS to L1 in English lessons and it was unavoidable, occurring naturally, both consciously and subconsciously by the four teachers, who informed the researcher informally. Although there was neither a policy demand for, nor prohibition of, CS in the EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia, the four EFL teachers switched to L1. There was a slight difference in CS to L1 between the four EFL teachers in EFL classes. The four EFL teachers primarily code-switched to L1 to ensure the students understood the lessons. To keep the anonymity, all the teachers and students in the examples below refer to them as A, B, C, and D.

##### 4.1 Classroom Management: Discipline

In terms of the classroom management function, namely, discipline, teacher A codeswitched to L1 in the first lesson two times in order to control students' behaviour and to warn some students to stop making noise in the class, punishing them with writing an assignment three times or asking them to explain the new lesson in front of their colleagues. Using punishment by the teachers might be due to the fact that they wanted to intimidate students to be more polite and more active in the class, in particular when L1 was used. Teacher A warned two students who were talking to each other; after warning them the first time, they did it again while the teacher was explaining the lesson. So he asked them to stand up until the end of the class. The other situation was when a student was sleeping during the lesson and teacher A punished him by asking him to stand up and then to write an assignment three times whilst his colleagues did it once. These examples used codeswitching between L1 and L2 to warn and punish students. The Arabic is an exact translation of the English in examples from 1 to 8. To keep the anonymity, all the students in the examples below refer to them as A, B and C.

Example 1: English (L2): Students A and B, I asked you to pay attention with us and to stop talking but you did not listen to me, so can you please stand up and pay attention with me because I will probably ask both of you to summarise the lesson at the end of the class.	Arabic (L1): الطالب ا و ب, لقد طلبت منكم ان تنبهوا للدرس و التوقف عن الحديث فيما بينكم اثناء الشرح ولكن لم تستمعوا لتوجيهاتي, لذلك من فضلكم قفوا بنهاية الفصل و اصغوا للدرس . احتما قيل بشأن أساسالكم بنهاية الحصة لكي تلخصوا ما الدرس.
Example 2: This next example indicates the situation with the student who was sleeping during the class: Student A, you are in a classroom not in the bed room. Please stand up and you will write the assignment for today three times unlike your colleagues who they are going to write it once.	الطالب ا , انت بالفصل ولست بغرفة نوم. من فضلك قف و اكتب واجب اليوم ثلاث مرات .خلاف زملائك الذين سيكتبونه من مرة واحدة.
With regard to the second lesson, teacher A codeswitched to L1 to use this function once to warn a student who was distracting his classmates by talking to them; the student stopped talking and was safe from punishment. This example illustrates how the teacher warned the student by using L2 and then by codeswitching to L1.	الطالب ا , انتبه للدرس وكن هادي غير ذلك سوف تعاقب.
Example 3: Student A, pay attention to the lesson and keep quiet otherwise you will be punished.	
In contrast, teacher B codeswitched to L1 two times to maintain students' behaviour by punishing them with additional activities inside the classroom or doing extra assignments after the class. First, the teacher codeswitched to L1 when a student came to the class late and the second time when a student forgot to bring his books.	انت متأخر. بد ان تقف في نهاية الفصل ل 11 دقيقة
Example 4: You are late a student B today. You have to stand up at the end of the class for 15 minutes.	

In all, teacher A was more strict and serious in punishing his rude or disobedient students than teacher B. This result might stem from students' cultures and backgrounds since if the teacher sent out a warning to the students whose misbehaviour was based on using L2, they might not take it seriously, although there is no empirical study that has discussed or investigated this. Based on the classroom observation, when the two L2 teachers codeswitched to L1 to warn or to punish their students, they took it seriously and became more polite. This finding is in agreement with Peregoy and Boyle (2000) and Myers-Scottons (1993) who showed that the use of CS to L1 is a useful tool to polish students' politeness and to encourage them to pay more attention to lessons so as to gain a better understanding of the subject materials. It further concurs with Moodley (2007) that teachers used L2 in L2 classrooms to control the classroom management and to maintain students' discipline in order to make them show proper respect to their teachers, can be an appropriate way to educate and to prune students' discipline. Nevertheless, contrary to expectations, the results from the study might not find a significant difference between the classroom observation and the previous studies in the literature review.

#### 4.2 Reprimand

Teacher A codeswitched to L1 once only in the first lesson to rebuke a student because he made fun of one of his classmates during the lesson. As a consequence, teacher A reprimanded student B and asked him to apologise publicly to his classmates due to his bad behaviour; he was subsequently punished by standing up for the entire class and writing the assignment three times unlike his classmates who wrote it once only. This example describes the situation when the teacher reproached the student. The Arabic is an exact translation of the English in examples 5 and 6.

Example 5: Student C, this is a bad and silly behaviour towards your colleague and this is not the first time to say such a bad word to your colleagues, therefore I order you to apologise to your classmate publicly, to stand up until the end of the this class and to write the assignment at the end of the class three times unlike your colleagues who are going to write it once. You will also come with me out the classroom.	الطالب ب , هذا سلوك سيء تجاه زميلك وهذه ليست المرة الأولى تقول م م سيء لزملائك. لذلك اعتذر امام الفصل لزميلك وقف الى نهاية الحصة واكتب الواجب وانت واقف ثلاث مرات خلاف زملائك. ايضا سوف ترافقتي خارج الفصل بعد نهاية الحصة
However, teacher B codeswitched to L1 in order to reproach three students who were talking to each other and to ask them to become silent and to concentrate on the lesson. Teacher B was very serious when he reprimanded the students making noise, which allowed teacher B to keep his students engaged in the lesson.	يا شباب, انتم بفصل دراسي وليس بالشارع. كل طالب يعلم قوانين الفصل المتخذة تجاه هذا السلوك, لذلك انصحكم بالهدوء, غير ذلك سيتم عقابكم
Example 6: Guys, you are not in the street but in the classroom. Everyone knows the rules of the classroom towards this behaviour so I advise you to be quiet otherwise you will be punished.	

Overall, teacher A codeswitched to L1 once to rebuke a student for his behaviour towards his colleagues in the two lessons while teacher B codeswitched twice in the two lessons to reprimand students about their misbehaviour, truancy and lateness. The most likely explanation for this is that when the two teachers codeswitched to L1 to warn or to rebuke students they might be more likely to behave well. By contrast, as soon as the two teachers used L2 for students' discipline, some students became ruder by laughing or misbehaving again. The reason for this is probably that using L2 by the two teachers might not show a serious threat or warning to the students and, therefore, the students misbehave again. Nonetheless, this finding corroborates the ideas of Phillipson (1992) and Cook (2001) who suggest that CS to L1 can play a significance role in rebuking and reproaching students when they misbehave or disrespect either their classmates or teachers. It further confirms that students take CS to L1 as a serious sign for threatening or warning. This result could be seen when teacher B using L2 to warn the students who came late but he realised that the use of L2 was not the appropriate tool to send

out a serious warning and therefore codeswitched to L1 to reprimand the late students. Consequently, these results disagree with those of other studies such as Phillipson (1992) and Cook (2001) that support using L2 to reprimand or to warn students for misbehaviour.

### 4.3 Explaining Classrooms Instructions

Teacher A codeswitched to L1 to give instructions twice in the first lesson, in order to clarify the questions and the structure of the exam. The teacher informed the students at the beginning of the class that he would address the procedures of the exam that would take place next week in detail at the end of the lesson. As soon as teacher A codeswitched to L1, the students paid more attention to what he said. This example shows this clarification. The Arabic is an exact translation of the English in examples 7 and 8.

Example 7: In next week, there will be an exam of English language course from the first chapter to the fourth chapter. The exam will be started at 9 am and it will be finished at 9:30 am. The questions will be divided to three parts: the first question will be multiple choices, the second question will be true and false and the final question will be either a short writing essay or a letter.	١ سبوع القادم سيكون اختبار للمادة اللغة الإنجليزية من الفصل ١ ول إلى الفصل الرابع الاختبار سيبدأ في الساعة التاسعة وينتهي في الساعة التاسعة والنصف. ستكون أسئلة مقسمة إلى ثلاثة أجزاء: السؤال ١ ول اختيار متعدد والسؤال الثاني صح و خطأ والسؤال الثالث اما تكتب رسالة أو مقال قصير
Teacher B, in contrast, codeswitched to L1 once at the beginning of the second lesson to explain the structure and the instructions of the exam, which was a week after my observation. According to the classroom observation, I found that the exams and the structure of the questions were similar between the two schools in Saudi Arabia may due to the Education policy system in KSA.	اود ان اذكركم وأؤكد من ان كل طالب منكم فهم التعليمات وطريقة الاختبار في ا سبوع القادم. رجاء تنسى تحضر للفصل على وقت الاختبار في التاسعة صباحا
Example 8: I would like just to remind you and to make sure that each one of you understands the instructions and the structures of the exam next week. Please do not forget to come to the classroom on time at 9 am.	

## 5. Conclusion

This study investigated the role of classroom management function of CS in EFL classrooms at two state secondary schools in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Through the classroom observations, this function of the CS was used by the four teachers in EFL classrooms. Research results were gained through the observation of classes for 18-year-olds. By using the function of classroom management by the four EFL teachers, they managed to control students' misbehaviour and engaged them in tasks. Similarly, the teachers tried to ensure that their students used the L2 most of the class time by reprimand them if they switched to L1. It is suggested that several studies should be made and carried out at Saudi schools in the future. This is due to the lack of an extensive study of CS in KSA despite CS becoming a popular area of study. It would be also a good idea to undertake a comparative analysis on bilingual students from different ages in order to identify the duration of CS in their conversations and the outcomes of their use of CS. This could raise awareness among EFL teachers of the need to balance the use of CS. However, it would be worthwhile to examine not only the role of CS in EFL classrooms and the attitudes of EFL teachers but also students' attitudes towards CS in EFL classrooms in order to investigate the usefulness of CS to L1 in EFL classrooms.

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