

## Code-switching in English classrooms and its Impact on undergraduate learning in a public university in Afghanistan

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### Abstract

The alternate use of two different languages as code-switching is situated in the field of bilingualism and it is considered a common feature of those who speak two or more languages. The occurrence of code-switching in English classrooms is considered a conducive linguistic resource to be exploited and practiced sensibly. This study aims to highlight the current situation of code-switching in EFL classrooms, the motives for EFL lecturers' code-switching during their instruction to facilitate the teaching and learning process, and the measures for avoiding the use of code-switching. A qualitative study based on interviews followed by classroom observation was conducted. Eight EFL learners in a public university participated in this study. Four instructional periods of classroom observations were carried out. The results indicated that code-switching is predominantly employed and learners perceive it positively and lecturers use it for content clarification and building rapport with learners. Moreover, it can be also considered as impeding language skills.

**Keywords:** Code-switching; EFL; EFL classroom; language.

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## 1. Introduction

Afghanistan in 2001, after the downfall of the Taliban, experienced one of the most active periods of English language teaching and learning in its history. Afghan students, therefore, were required to acquire the English language as their foreign language (Alimyar, 2020). The capability to shift from one language to another during conversation is accepted as normal in a multilingual country like Afghanistan (Meer, 2018). Afghan people intentionally code-switch in their daily conversation. President Ghani, for example, code-switched from Pashto to Dari or vice-versa while talking because a majority of the audience speaks these two languages (Meer, 2019).

Within the educational context, the official national languages in Afghan schools and universities are utilized as the medium of instruction, whereas the English language as a compulsory subject is taught from 4<sup>th</sup> grade at schools up to university (Narasuman, Wali & Sadry, 2019). The phenomenon of code-switching, especially at the tertiary level, is common. Lecturers and learners from English language and literature departments at universities are obliged to use English in the classrooms. This implies, according to Narasuman, Wali, and Sadry (2019), who asserted that many inhabitants in Afghan EFL classes are bilingual and multi-lingual namely use Dari/ Pashto and English while communicating with each other. The decision Alenezi (2010) asserted for selecting the language of instruction was important for academic institutes and learners. With a definition of the English classroom in Afghanistan as a bilingual and multilingual society in mind, code-switching can, therefore, be seen as quite common in the EFL classrooms in Afghanistan.

A large population in the world today is estimated to be bilingual or multilingual, the prior means having to command over two languages and the latter means having command over more than two languages (Noori & Rasoly, 2017; Farjami, 2018). These bilingual or multilingual speakers shift amongst languages when they talk by employing two or more languages (Mguwata, 2020). This, as a result, is referred to as code-switching. Code-switching is a hot topic in countries whose speakers are bilingual and multi-lingual and usually switch from one language to another language whenever they speak (Noori & Rasoly, 2017). Similarly, code-switching, concerning bilingual and multilingual learners, is a widespread linguistic phenomenon that linguists, educators, and policymakers' debate upon it continually (Selamat, 2014). The term code-switching denotes a person who masters two or more languages and is capable of switching between languages in speech (Ahlberg & Bogunic, 2011). As per the code-switching concept, there are various definitions one can find by different authors. According to Valdes-Fallis (1978), for example, "Code-switching is to shift between two languages". Similarly, Weinreich (1953) defined code-switching as when bilinguals switch from one language to the other. Also, code-switching is the use of two or more languages inside continuous dialogue (Heller, 1992).

Moreover, the situation of code-switching in a formal educational setting is treated differently as compared to code-switching in a social setting, that is, code-switching in an educational context is regarded inappropriate, whereas the ability of code-switching in a social setting is considered an asset and valuable addition to their range of communication (Carraro & Trinder, 2021). This is because speakers seem to find code-switching in a natural dialog effortless than by keeping the communication totally in the same language (Macaro, 2005). In an educational setting, Cook (2008) claims "The classroom itself often becomes a code-switching situation" and agreed that code-switching is unavoidable in a classroom when the lecturer is a native speaker and has the knowledge of learners' first language. Furthermore, Valdes-Fallis (1978) added "Code-switching is exclusively necessary for lecturers whose learners are bilinguals". The alternate use of two different languages as code-switching is situated in the field of bilingualism and is considered a common feature of those who speak two or more languages and usually, it is approached from linguistic and social perspectives (Yulyana, 2015). Code-switching, especially in language teaching classes, has come into practice within lecturers' and learners' speeches (Sert, 2005).

### **1.1. Literature review**

Regarding the search procedure, the researcher searched articles relevant to code-switching in EFL classrooms. These search engines included Google Scholar, ERIC, ScienceDirect, Elsevier, Sage Journals, Semantic Scholar, and Research Gate. The information drawn from these journal articles in the construction of the literature review was empirical resources. This indicated that these researches were based on systematic experimentations, observation, or experiences. Also, these journal articles were written using predictable structures in which the authors identified research questions, reviewed relevant literature, described research methods in detail, and presented findings and conclusions. The researcher used keywords in conducting the literature review. For example, code-switching used by lecturers, EFL learners' perceptions toward code-switching, benefits, and drawbacks of code-switching in EFL classrooms, and how code-switching is perceived in other disciplines. In addition to that, inappropriate sources and articles irrelevant to code-switching in English classrooms were eliminated. Considering the formulated problem, the researcher critically reviewed studies following a set of concepts and questions.

According to Yulyana (2015), code-switching commonly and willingly happened in language classrooms when lecturers taught a foreign language or a second language. With much focus placed on the significance of learning the English language in a classroom as a special context, language lecturers are highly accountable for educating learners to attain the native-like qualities of a language user. It was a challenging task for the lecturer, especially for one who dealt with two languages that did not apply the same grammatical and phonological properties and qualities (Nordin et al., 2013). EFL classroom, according to Qian, Tian, and Wang (2009), was a special setting and tremendously important for EFL learners' development where code-switching was often a practiced strategy for lecturers in interaction and classroom management. Lecturers in such a setting, therefore, employed every resource to ensure the smoothness of communication and education of their learners (Mirzoeva, 2021). The researchers further added that code-switching as a communication strategy was even more pleasant for lecturers and learners who shared the same homogeneous ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. The practice of code-switching in English classrooms occurred frequently with positive impacts on teaching and learning a foreign language (Nguyen, Grainger & Carey, 2016; Fachriyah, 2017).

Similarly, Nordin et al. (2013) and Gallagher (2020) advocated the occurrence of code-switching in English classrooms and considered it a conducive linguistic resource to be exploited and practiced sensibly. Similarly, Azlan and Narasuman (2013) supported code-switching as an effective practice for learning, especially when teaching learners with low proficiency. This is because it provided ease of communication and some terms became easier for learners to understand better if explained in the native language. Likewise, lecturers in Biology, Mathematics, and Technology of Education frequently code-switched for further clarification (Al Arief & Khotimah, 2019). Moreover, May and Aziz (2020) promoted code-switching in English classrooms as an efficient and time-saving technique and it indeed accelerated the language learning process. Likewise, EFL learners echoed their preferences toward code-switching in the classroom and regarded the lessons unproductive unless there was code-switching to be able to understand at some point (Luo, 2019). The positive aspect of using code-switching not only in lecturer-learner interaction in the classroom but also in foreign language learning should not be ignored by those who work in foreign language learning areas (Greggio & Gil, 2007).

On one side of the debate, according to Nurhanmidah, Fauziati, and Supriyadi (2018), EFL learners perceived code-switching as an asset and inclined lecturers to code-switch in EFL classroom setting because of their insufficient ability in the English language and the difficulty of on the content on of on the teaching materials and the unfamiliar terms. For example, these learners wanted their lecturer to code-switch for clarification of the concept, check comprehension, to ensure the comprehensibility of business terms (Pham, 2015), provide additional explanation and clarification, construct learners'

knowledge, and invite questions (Cahyani, de Courcy & Barnett, 2018; Younas et al., 2020). According to Hussein, Saed, and Haider (2020), EFL learners believed that lecturers should code-switch when there is a lack of equivalent vocabulary items in the source language which may cause a misunderstanding of the intended message. The authors further added that lecturers generally code-switch when there is a lack of command or mastery over the target language or linguistically uncertain.

In discussing the reasons for lecturers' code-switching, EFL learners expected lecturers to code-switch sometimes for different reasons (Nordin et al., 2013; Nguyen, Grainger & Carey, 2016). Lecturers' code-switching, for example, included providing instruction, giving feedback, explaining grammar, and articulating assignments, tests, and quizzes (Giaconi, Bianco, D'Angelo, Halwany & Capellini, 2021). In addition to that, the lecturer's use of code-switching made learners more confident and comfortable, shrank language and mental anxiety, eliminated hesitations, and removed concept-related confusion for teaching and learning purposes (Narasuman, Wali & Sadly, 2019). Likewise, EFL learners proposed lecturers code-switch when there was an important issue relevant to the exam and assessment which was very important for them. Because they did not want to remain uninformed or leave any information behind (Luo, 2019), or the teacher did not want to jeopardize the misinterpretation of the important message (Gulzar & Al Asmari, 2014). In addition to the value devoted to lecturers' code-switching, students of business communication perceived it as an assistance to develop correct word choices for translation tasks (Pham, 2015). The environment changed and became competitive when lecturers taught physical modalities such as competitive activities in physical education. Lecturers, therefore, tended to code-switch and focused on complex rules that many learners were not able to understand (Bernstein & Herman, 2014).

Furthermore, lecturers' code-switching took place for classroom management to control learners' behavior (Cahyani, de Courcy & Barnett, 2018). The purpose of the lecturer's use of code-switching in the classroom was to elucidate certain concepts and theories and to emphasize a point (Azlan & Narasuman, 2013). As per the reasons for the lecturer's use of code-switching, there were three different situations in which classroom lecturers code-switched. These were a lack of comprehension of the instruction provided in English, discussing cultural aspects of an issue, and when there was need for clarifying some elusive points in the target language (Narasuman, Wali & Sadly, 2019). In a positive light, as noted by Bilgin and Rahimi (2013), Nguyen, Grainger, and Carey (2016), Fachriyah (2017), and Cahyani, de Courcy, and Barnett (2018), lecturers usually code-switched for interpersonal relations, entertainment, and general discussions. For example, sometimes lecturers made jokes to create a funny, humorous, and hilarious environment to humanize the classroom, relieve boredom, relieve tension and anxiety, or just to get acquainted with each other in the educational situation. For building a supportive classroom atmosphere, these all validated a connection between the lecturer and learners. In addition to that, Gulzar and Al Asmari (2014) and Al Arief and Khotimah (2019) highlighted that EFL teachers usually code-switched in classrooms to shift the topic.

Although researchers attributed the number of avails to code-switching in EFL classrooms, some researchers such as Nguyen, Grainger, and Carey (2016), Fachriyah (2017), and Gallagher (2020) seemed to have a strong tendency against utilizing the first language in EFL classroom. EFL learners who desired to hone beyond that stage of proficiency perceived code-switching as less prestigious and minimized the emphasis on becoming fluent in English. EFL lecturers emphasized decreasing code-switching drastically from level to level to provide strong evidence of learners' language success (Aigerim, Fauziya, Meruyert, Gulnara & Zharkinay, 2022). The English-only method, according to these experts, accelerated a greater form of language learning (Qian, Tian & Wang, 2009; Gallagher, 2020). Moreover, code-switching is perceived as an impediment to effective language learning. For example, it presumably caused a decrease in vocabulary and hampered learners' speaking fluency in English. As per its redundancy in the classroom,

Pham (2015) indicated that learners preferred to restrain code-switching and perceived it counterproductive to the development of language learning and autonomous learning. Therefore, the extensive use of code-switching in English-oriented classrooms must not be allowed (Azlan & Narasuman, 2013). Another concern May and Aziz (2020) highlighted is that learners with code-switching became dependent on their first language and it led EFL learners to a spoon-feeding culture which made learners depend on their lecturers and once (Bensen & Çavusoglu, 2013) they got used to the usage of it, they expected their teachers to use it all the time in speaking activities (Ling et al., 2014).

English, according to Krashen (1985), should be the only medium of teaching in classrooms that practice English as a second language because the first language would diminish learners from learning the target language. Similarly, Pennycook (1994) supported the argument of the Communicative Approach that teaching authentic communication in a second language was best for monolinguals to learn the target language. In the same manner, first-language communication in EFL classrooms detracted learners' language skills. Instead, target language should be deployed for all purposes in the classroom after the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Wringe, 1989; Patek, 2003). On the other hand, the use of Community Language Learning (CLL) advocated the inclusion of learners' first language during the learning process to make the meaning clear and to build a bridge from the known to the unknown where learners feel more secure by understanding everything (Nurhasanah, 2015). According to the author, it began with a lecturer discussion about the topic in the first language, followed by translation, and then learners repeated it.

Numerous studies have been conducted in various countries to measure code-switching among EFL university lecturers and learners (Ciobanu, 2018; Uzunboylu & Özcan, 2019). A large number of those studies concluded that EFL learners favored the use of code-switching in the classroom. The results of some of these studies are below:

Ferguson (2003) carried out a study exploring the merits and limitations of code-switching in the African context. The outcome of the study revealed that the phenomenon of code-switching in language classrooms was not considered hostile and there was no evidence that classroom code-switching was harmful. Furthermore, the study found that code-switching can be effectively exploited as a communicative and pedagogic resource in instruction. It is because code-switching was a potential means for alleviating the complications experienced by learners.

Due to the alarming signals of decreasing proficiency levels among English language learners, Ahmad and Jusoff (2009) investigated 257 learners' perceptions of their teachers' use of code-switching in a public university in Malaysia. Their results indicated that learners had positive perceptions of their teachers' use of code-switching in English learning classrooms. Specifically, because of teachers' use of code-switching in the classroom, learners were successfully engaged in their classroom activities.

Another survey was carried out by Horasan (2014) in the Turkish context. In this study, 43 learners and 4 lecturers in two EFL classrooms participated. The results of both quantitative and qualitative analysis indicated learners' and their lecturers' high use of code-switching (Basöz & Can, 2021). The purpose of EFL lecturers' use of code-switching was to attract learners' attention, check their comprehension, facilitate classroom management and develop learners' learning process. Learners exploited code-switching to comment on the task and grammar points.

Simasiku, Kasanda, and Smit (2015) conducted research in the Caprivi Education Region of Namibia to investigate whether the use of the first language in English classrooms heightened students' academic achievement. This investigation involved 12 teachers at 12 schools in the region. The authors found that code-switching was perceived by teachers as improving students' English language skills, improving

teaching and learning of English, students understood the subject matter, and students were actively involved in their learning.

### **1.2. Conceptual background**

Language, to the construction of meaning for learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds, is important in the bilingual and multilingual Afghan classroom setting. In formal occasions, especially in EFL classrooms, the phenomenon of code-switching in speech is acknowledged as a typical occurrence. This means EFL lecturers at universities frequently code-switch from English to the national languages despite their awareness of the determination to restrict code-switching because it is considered to make language skills tenuous (Legas & Mengistu, 2018). This claim is based on the observation the researcher experienced both as an EFL learner at Nangarhar University and also as a teaching staff at Kandahar University. Whereas, lecturers should endeavor to primarily communicate in the target language (Al-Adnani & Elyas, 2016). On the other hand, EFL learners' English proficiency level varies from region to region and person to person depending on the age at which the learners were exposed and the opportunities available for them to acquire the English language even English language is taught at schools.

### **1.3. Purpose of study**

The literature on English language acquisition has been driven by the belief that a second language is best taught and acquired only in a second language, whereas this theory does not have empirical support (Auerbach, 1993). There is plenty of literature available regarding code-switching both fruitful and hostile, and also an appropriate occasion for lecturers to code-switch. Although research on code-switching in classrooms has been conducted in many parts of the world, however, going through the Afghan research database, it is relatively insufficiently researched. Also, code-switching remains underexplored in the Afghan context, especially from EFL learners' perspectives. In this regard, the following three questions guided this research.

Q1. What is the current situation of lecturers' use of code-switching in undergraduate student classrooms in Afghanistan?

Q2. What are the reasons for the lecturers' use of code-switching?

Q3. What can be the measures to avoid the lecturers' use of code-switching?

## **2. Materials and Methods**

For this study, a method of triangulation for research credibility was employed (Carter, 2014). That is, a qualitative approach under a nominalist epistemological foundation was used to measure code-switching. Specifically, case studies involving semi-structured interviews followed by in-classroom observation as naturally occurring to give an in-depth description of the subject because qualitative research methods were developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena (Myers, 1997). Furthermore, qualitative research, especially semi-structured interviews also cater to and seek to examine human behavior, human characteristics, emotions, experiences, perceptions of the participants, and attitudes which quantitative research cannot (Hamzaoui, 2022). Similarly, the interview is a significant tool for collecting data which involves oral communication between the researcher and the participant (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 1998, p. 1). The researcher chose two particular courses such as English Literature and Speaking Solution because they required learners to actively participate in interactive activities that support oral communication. Therefore, a case study is deemed suitable. The case study enables the researcher to achieve great insight into a case where the focus is on a specific context (Yin, 2013). Case studies, according to Yin, are the preferred approach when "why" or "how" questions are asked and when the emphasis is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.

### **2.1. Participants**

The available population was all the EFL learners in the public sector, at Kandahar University in Afghanistan. Concerning qualitative study, the selection of respondents intended to locate information-rich individuals who enriched the data and site for the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The researcher intended to purposefully select and invite eight EFL (4 male & 4 female) freshmen, sophomore, junior and senior learners for conducting interviews individually who studied in an English Department in Education Faculty at Kandahar University. In line with this, an appropriate sampling technique was purposeful and it was based on the assumption that the researcher wanted to discover, understand and gain insight (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Also, purposeful sampling is when the researcher selects individuals and sites for a study on purpose because they can explicitly inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The names of all the respondents were replaced with pseudonyms to protect their identities. Considering the classroom observation, the researcher selected two EFL lecturers who taught literature and speaking subjects.

### **2.2. Data Collection Instrument**

The researcher found several instruments used to measure EFL learners' perceptions regarding code-switching. The researcher adopted a questionnaire developed by (Pham, 2015) (see Appendix B). Before the interview, the instrument was consulted with and reviewed by the supervisor to scrutinize and establish validity. Based on constructive feedback from the supervisor, changes were made to the instrument. These learners were contacted to obtain consent for the interview and made an appointment for the interviews. The related questions were probed by these learners who provided their insights, opinions, and comments and elaborated on some points. Based on the observational framework of Greggio and Gill (2007) that verified to be an instrument, the researcher adopted and modified it for conducting a systematic observation. The researcher only covered one aspect of it, that is, reasons for code-switching.

### **2.3. Procedure**

According to Kirk (2007), important ethical issues are involved in any social research including that into education, which deals with the beliefs, values, and lives of people. Before the interview, the respondents were informed in advance about the purposes, the nature of the study, the issues, and the procedures of the interview. All the respondents engaged in this study were volunteers, and the respondents were invited to take part in this study by invitation letter (see Appendix A). Data were collected from individual EFL learners utilizing semi-structured interviews to gather their beliefs and teaching experiences in this study site. The length of the discussion with each interviewee varied from ten to fifteen minutes and each interview was recorded using a cellphone. Accordingly, there was a set of follow-up interviews with the participants of this study to avoid ambiguities, and the data collection ended when the researcher felt saturation was reached. In addition to that, the researcher observed and listened to two class sessions (200 minutes) for each lecturer to explore classroom interactions and manually took notes of interactions containing the use of code-switching. Additionally, the researcher had pre and post-observation meetings with the lecturers to check the uncertainties.

### **2.4. Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed and coded guided by the research questions. Data analysis is the process of making sense of the data, which involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what respondents have said and what the researcher has seen and read; it is the process of making meaning (Woods, 2011). Accordingly, Woods added that qualitative data analysis involves identifying, coding, and categorizing patterns or themes found in the collected data guided by the research questions. The researcher recorded all the interviews and then transcribed them. Then, the researcher reviewed each respondent's transcript

to identify specific beliefs about code-switching. As per the data analysis, the researcher referred to the theory of Miles and Huberman in analyzing the data. Data analysis consisted of three steps: Data reduction (by summarizing, coding, and unraveling themes), data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp. 10-11). As per the validation of the analysis, the research considered an outside peer perspective by examining the assumptions and thoughts of learners about code-switching. To further enrich the trustworthiness of the findings, the respondents were invited for member checks to review, make changes to their insights and share further information.

### 3. Results

The findings of this research concerning code-switching have been organized into themes that emerged mainly through the process of interviews and triangulated with data from observation. The findings will answer the three research questions. The sequence follows the order of the three research questions presenting the results responding to each research question.

#### 3.1. Analysis of the Interviews

The current study identified several themes from the interview data, but the following table represents the prominent themes.

**Table 1**

*Findings of Code-switching in EFL Classroom*

Research Question	Theme	Respondents	Comments
Current situation of code-switching	Code-switching Welcomed	All	Lecturers use Pashto quite often
Reasons for code-switching	Clarification of Content	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, & 8	Learners comprehend lessons better
	Interpersonal Relations	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 8	To entertain & humanize the classroom
Measures to avoid code-switching	Weakens Language Skills	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, & 8	Damages learners' fluency

Table 1 identifies the perceived themes of lecturers' use of code-switching in EFL classrooms. There are four major themes drawn from the interview data. Below are the responses from the respondents.

##### 3.1.1. Theme 1: Code-Switching is Welcomed

When the respondents were asked about the current situation of lecturers' use of code-switching, all of these respondents confirmed that code-switching occurs frequently in EFL classrooms. According to these respondents, it is almost impossible for lecturers to teach without using their native language during teaching EFL classes, especially EFL learners in lower classes. That is, the majority of these learners come from different backgrounds where they are not exposed to the usage of the English language. For example, the English of these learners is not very convincing and it is very hard for them to comprehend issues such as phonology and morphology. Therefore, EFL lecturers adopt code-switching and use the Pashto language to make sure that every individual understands the content. All of these respondents agreed that lecturers' use of code-switching is beneficial in freshmen or dealing with low proficiency level classes to make teaching and learning clear and effective. The following excerpt justifies the current situation of code-switching in EFL classes.

*"In the first year of the university, lecturers were using Pashto quite often to familiarize us with new subjects and credit systems. In addition to that, some basic important lessons which work as pillars for learning advanced English, especially when teaching low proficiency learners."* (All respondents).



### 3.1.2. Theme 2: Clarification of Content

While the respondents were asked about the reasons for lecturers' use of code-switching, almost all the respondents were affirmative of lecturers' use of code-switching to clarify the content. This is the second most widely employed reason for code-switching identified in the interview data. EFL lecturers tended to switch to the learners' first language on many occasions to expand the explanation of some given points. For example, these learners justified that lecturer sometimes code-switch to make the learners comprehend the unclear concepts and some sophisticated terminologies that require further explanation to overcome the challenge. Moreover, the learners also revealed that lecturers switched the language to discuss assignments and tests. These learners emphasized that lecturers have to give us a clear picture of the assessment process. The following excerpts are the justification of EFL lecturers' code-switching.

*"Sometimes when explaining the ground roles or a particular subject, explaining an assignment and important classroom activities or final exam questions for better comprehension, our teachers were switching from one language to another particularly from English to Pashto".* (Respondents: 2, 5, 7 & 8).

*"Because we see in most English teaching classes, teacher code-switch to explain the grammatical issues, teach vocabulary, translate the English paragraphs and many more cases and it is still going on".* (Respondents: 1, 3, & 4).

### 3.1.3. Theme 3: Interpersonal Relations

In the interviews, all of the respondents except respondent 2 mentioned that their lecturers usually switched to the local language to avoid boredom during the teaching and learning process. The purpose of this was to strengthen the relationship with learners and motivate them to openly and actively participate in learning activities. To make the learning environment friendly, for instance, the lecturers usually make jokes related to the lesson to entertain the learners or shift the topic to a general discussion for relieving anxiety. Because it is either more fun to tell jokes in local languages rather than in English or there is a lack of equal vocabulary. The extracts by respondents are below.

*"Most of the time when we finish our lesson, our lecturers begin discussing different topics. I believe it is because the lecturer wants to hear from everyone. If the lecturer goes ahead with English, I think most of the students will remain silent. Because very few students are fluent and the others will not participate in the discussion. For example, once the teacher was lecturing about operant conditioning, a behaviorism learning theory, the lecturer shared his personal story and asked us if we have experienced something similar. The majority of the learners said nothing, but when he (the lecturer) asked us in Pashto the same thing, a lot of students raised their hands and wanted to share their stories".* (Respondents: 1, 3, 4 & 5).

*"When the class gets bored, they are mixing language for entertainment. For example, jokes, example or idiom related to lesson"* (Respondents: 2, 6 & 8).

### 3.1.4. Theme 4: Weakens Language Skills

When it comes to the drawbacks of code-switching in EFL classrooms, all of the respondents considered the practice of code-switching a contentious issue because it is believed to result in undesirable language use among EFL learners. Precisely, the use of the Pashto language in EFL classrooms will eventually result in a decline in the standards of English. All of the respondents agreed that code-switching should not be extensively used because it weakens language skills. Below are the responses given by respondents regarding lecturers' use of code-switching.

*"I believe constant use of code-switching will weaken learners' ability because they will not have any chances for improving their skills"* (Respondents: 2 & 8).

*“Code-switching is very bad. For example, learners make a mess out of the conversation and they are unable to speak the language properly. Depending too much on local language will damage learners’ fluency. Eventually, students become lazy and rely on spoon-feeding culture”.* (Respondents: 2, 3, 4 & 5).

*“Using code-mixing can make the learner mentally dull and frail from the nimble or agile position. Its usage has to be minimized as much as possible and the learners will later get used to the difficulties”.* (Respondents: 7).

### **3.2. Analysis of Classroom Observation**

Through classroom observation and transcription analysis, the findings of the interviews are concurrent with the observation. However, the researcher identified two new themes: Getting attention and building confidence. During the observation, it was noticed that EFL lecturers mainly used English as a means of lecturing in the classroom. Yet, these lecturers switched to Pashto (The national language) for a limited purpose. The researcher also noticed that the average use of code-switching during classroom observation decreased and the lecturer did not often use code-switching. With this in mind, the researcher assumed that lecturers did not employ code-switching because they were being observed.

#### **3.2.1. Theme 1: Building Confidence**

The data from the observation indicated that the use of code-switching by EFL lecturers was frequent in some particular moments such as building confidence, especially among female learners. The researcher observed that the lecturer frequently encouraged female learners to actively participate in classroom activities. To be more precise, female learners, especially freshmen, seemed to have a lack of confidence. Therefore, lecturers motivated them to confidently come in front of the classroom and deliver the presentation.

#### **3.2.2. Theme 2: Getting Attention**

It was observed that lecturers used code-switching to maintain classroom discipline. The lecturer tried to get learners’ attention and remain focused and avoid classroom disruption. For example, the lecturer used the term “Mutawajee” (Attention!). Most importantly, the language of instruction remained to be English.

## **4. Discussion**

The results from the analysis of EFL learners’ interviews revealed that EFL lecturers were more inclined to use the English language in their teaching. Yet, the use of code-switching is considered necessary for facilitating the learning process and it was used predominantly. Respondents in this study acknowledged that a code-switching is a constructive tool that can be utilized to enhance learners’ language learning experience. The respondents support the utmost use of code-switching by lecturers in lower classes where learners have low proficiency in the English language. This finding is closely aligned with those of previous studies about positive views of code-switching. For instance, Azlan and Narasuman (2013) and Gallagher (2020) found code-switching a conducive linguistic tool, especially when teaching learners with low proficiency in EFL classrooms.

The findings of this study revealed that there are several reasons for lecturers’ code-switching in the classroom. For example, lecturers usually code-switched to clarify vague points in a limited time, discussing rubrics for assignments and exam procedures (Ammour & Belmekki, 2022; Salama, Chiparausha & Bsatar, 2022). According to the interviews, EFL learners expected their lecturers to switch the language when is something challenging to understand. This means that learners would have been able to eliminate confusion regarding lessons and also the assessment process. This finding aligns strongly with Narasuman, Wali, and Sadly (2019) who found that clarifying concept-related confusion and complex rules, articulating

assignments and exams, and excluding hesitations are the main purposes of code-switching used by EFL lecturers in the classroom.

The results of the study also indicated that EFL lecturers code-switched to involve in social and informal conversations and it appeared to occur at the beginning, middle, and end of instruction. Specifically, it appears more often at the beginning of the session to exchange greetings. During the classroom session, it happens when the lecturer provides context-related examples, personal stories, or experiences. Likewise, lecturers code-switched in the middle or end of the instruction to create a humorous environment by making some jokes to relieve boredom. This is because there is either lack of equal vocabulary or there is more excitement in the Pashto language rather than in English. These findings are consistent with Fachriyah's (2017) findings that lecturers usually code-switch for interpersonal relations, entertainment to humanize the classroom, and social and general discussion.

In the interviews, however, it was found that the use of code-switching is disadvantageous and its usage has to be minimized, especially in higher classes. The respondents in this study had negative views and believed it will eventually result in an unacceptable decline in the standards of English language use among learners. Similarly, the extensive usage of code-switching by lecturers will increase the learners' reliance on the lecturer and the learners' dependency on their first language despite these learners' acknowledgment that code-switching by lecturers is essential under certain circumstances. This finding is in harmony with those of Horasan (2014) in the literature that EFL learners preferred their lecturers to speak mostly English in the classroom because (Qian, Tian & Wang, 2009) presumably considered it to cause a decrease in vocabulary and impedes learners' speaking fluency in English.

Keen observation of the current study revealed that lecturers switched their languages to ascertain EFL learners' confidence. The researcher observed that in speaking subjects, lecturers code-switched to give confidence to female learners. Lecturers intended to allow female learners to actively participate in learning activities. Considering their lack of confidence, therefore, lecturers code-switched to increase their confidence and motivation in learning. Most importantly, it was observed that there was a slight decrease in the lecturers' use of code-switching. This finding is further supported by Al-Qaysi (2019) who found that constructing confidence in learners to boost their psychological feelings as well as augmenting their motivation in the learning process is one of the advantages of code-switching.

Finally, the classroom observation indicated that lecturers code-switched to maintain classroom management, especially to capture learners' attention and to sustain their interest in the lessons. During the classroom observation, it was observed that code-switching was an effective tool to sustain learners' attention during classroom instruction and focus on classroom tasks. This finding is in line with observation conducted by Promnath and Tayjasant (2016) and their findings revealed that it is challenging sometimes for teachers to get students' attention in English. Students, however, displayed more attention when their teachers addressed them in the Thai language.

## **5. Conclusion**

The overarching purpose of this study was to investigate EFL learners' perspectives and beliefs on how these learners perceive code-switching. This study involved interviews with selected eight cohorts of EFL male and female learners regarding the practice of their lecturers in Afghan EFL classrooms. Also, this study included four sessions of classroom observation of two EFL lecturers with different subjects. The results of this study give a strong indicator that code-switching is one of the promising pedagogical tools and it is accepted to clarify vague issues and leave no confusion in a limited time. Furthermore, the results identified that lecturers code-switched to build rapport including classroom management. Nevertheless, learners had negative sentiments regarding code-switching and expected lecturers to exclude the first language, especially in higher EFL classrooms.

Code-switching should be seen as a way to improve communication. The usage of code-switching varies according to its context. The use of code-switching serves as a pedagogical tool as part of EFL lecturers' repertoire of strategies to scaffold the learners' learning. However, the use of code-switching in the EFL classroom is often viewed with suspicion and is invariably believed to pose an insidious threat to foreign language development. These contradictory beliefs about code-switching could impact how it is used in the classroom. Therefore, the results of this research suggest that EFL lecturers should not suppress the use of code-switching or endeavor to use the English language entirely.

This was preliminary research involving interviews and classroom observations. Therefore, limitations must be noted in this study. First, even though the sample had diverse educational levels, this study was only limited to Kandahar University with a sample size of 8 respondents and this could not be generalized to other public universities in Afghanistan. Second, there is no evidence from the EFL lecturers' perspective. Lecturers' perspectives would have convincingly demonstrated the reasons for their code-switching. Third, my presence as an observer during English lessons may have affected the authenticity of classroom talk. The lecturers were informed earlier that the purpose of classroom observations was for me to observe code-switching use in actual classroom situations, which may have resulted in some form of behavior alteration by the lecturer. Lecturers might have felt self-conscious of their code choice and unintentionally deviated from their usual code-switching practice. With this in mind, only limited observations were conducted.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the limitations of this study, recommendations for future studies on the same topic are listed below.

- Further research could be conducted with a wider sample size from other public universities to generate a more fine-grained understanding.
- Further study should be carried out right from EFL lecturers' perspectives on code-switching.
- Future research should be replicated to include more EFL classroom observations to determine the overarching aim of code-switching.

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