

Code-Switching and English Language: A Linguistic Study in the Saudi Perspective

Ali Mohammed Alqarni¹

¹ Department of Foreign Languages, College of Arts and Human Sciences, Al-Baha, Al-Baha University, Saudi Arabia

Correspondence: Ali Mohammed Alqarni, Department of Foreign Languages, College of Arts and Human Sciences, Al-Baha, Al-Baha University, Saudi Arabia.

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Abstract

There are several interpretations of code-switching. Some teachers encourage EFL learners to apply it as they believe it helps them acquire and comprehend the target language. This study investigates in three different settings the code-switching behaviors of 10 Saudi students, the association between the participants' degree of English proficiency and their employment of code-switching. It also investigates how the context affects code-switching behaviors by examining the various types of code-switch as well as how code-switchers perceive it. The study's qualitative methodology involved interviewing the participants and use of checklist to analyze their responses. Results show the participants with high English proficiency levels, did not like to switch codes. Additionally, while the minority of participants claimed they did not code-switch in the Saudi context, the remaining individuals claimed they did so in each of the three settings. However, the study found that among the participants, one word (noun) was the form of code-switch that was used the most frequently. Finally, the study demonstrated that even though all individuals occasionally switched codes, they all had unfavorable perceptions of it. The study suggests that teachers should regulate code-switching in different contexts.

Keywords: code-switching, English proficiency, qualitative research, Saudi perspective

1. Introduction

Bilingualism has been the subject of conflicting views and judgements since the very inception of the field's research. There is also disagreement about how to define the term "bilingualism." Since then, a variety of hypotheses have been put forth and empirical research has been undertaken to get clear results that back each line of thought. Since language is a social construct, bilingualism studies have expanded beyond linguistic explanations to take into account more significant social factors that both impact and are affected by bilingualism (Gumperz, 1982; Romaine, 1994). Thus, the scope of bilingualism has expanded to include social, religious, economic, and demographic concerns. Additionally, the idea of identity has emerged as a key participant in the multilingual arena.

One of the more contentious features of bilingualism, code-switching, has drawn a lot of attention. Code-switching is seen differently due to various cultural, linguistic, social, and behavioral aspects. People have either good, negative, or indifferent opinions about this phenomenon. It is suspected that many speakers may not be completely aware of how code-switching affects their communication relationships (Al-Ahdal, 2020; Alharbi & Al-Ahdal, 2022; Alluhaybi, 2020). As an illustration of this observations, one of our colleagues specifically witnessed its impact at one of the Saudi meetings in Memphis when he requested that there be no English used. Even if the atmosphere of the sessions favored exclusive use of Arabic, speaking English frequently resulted in communication issues. The observer's friend's immediate and unexpected response to using English was not simply the result of his language proficiency, but also of his identity, which is significant in this context. Additionally, other compatriots who shared his concerns backed his explicit response. This prompted the current study looks into the phenomena of code-switching among Saudi students in Memphis by this occurrence, as well as the readings from the bilingualism course. Our approach examines code-switching from several interconnected linguistic, contextual, and individual viewpoints. The results of our research indicate that identity, which is dynamic and ever-changing, plays a key role in code-switching, making it a contentious phenomenon. In this study, answers to the following questions are sought with respect to the bilingual Saudi community:

- 1) How does code-switching relate to English proficiency level?
- 2) How do contexts affect code-switching?
- 3) Which type of code-switching is employed, and why?
- 4) How the code-switching is perceived by the users?

2. Literature Review

Code-switching

The practice of code-switching (CS) is prevalent in groups of individuals who can speak two or more languages (Larbah & Oliver, 2015). This behaviour is "social and cognitive in nature" (Larbah & Oliver, 2015, p. 3). The question of whether CS, which occurs when students are learning in a second language (L2) context, is advantageous for learning has received a lot of attention in research. There are now two different schools of thought. One argues that CS should only be used cautiously since it inhibits students from acquiring L2 (Larbah & Oliver, 2015). The other believes that the employment of CS significantly contributes to a user's ability to perform well in an L2 context. The Arabic-English cohort's strongest interactional traits are CS (Abdul-Zahra, 2010; Abu Mathkour, 2004; Alrowais, 2012; Jdetawy, 2011). CS is therefore a choice that bilinguals possess (Romaine, 1994).

Multilinguals employ two or more languages to understand their situation, which is the essence of CS in its most basic form (Alhourani, 2018). According to Richards et al. (1993), "the transition by one speaker (or writer) from one language or linguistic variation to another" is what is meant by CS (p. 58). The structuralist and the sociolinguistic are the two linguistic branches of computational science (Boztepe, 2002). The sociolinguist is interested in how CS is utilised to create meaning, while the structuralist approach CS from a grammatical perspective. These roles complement each other (Boztepe, 2002). When both speakers are conversant in the language, Cook (2001) defines CS as "a process of altering linguistic codes in mid-speech" (p. 83). Tag switching, intra-sentential switching, and inter-sentential switching are the different types of CS (Poplack, 1980). Using a phrase from one language in another is known as "tagging." Tag switching adheres to syntactic conventions. This is an extremely intricate sort of code-switching that occurs after a sentence to help with fluency, whereas intra-sentential switching occurs within a phrase (Zirker, 2007). Language shifting, or CS, differs from borrowing in that it involves integrating a single lexical unit from one language's morphology and phonology into the target language (Alluhaybi, 2020).

Sociolinguistic Approaches to Code-Switching

The purpose of research studies using a sociolinguistic approach is to discover the function of code-switching as well as the factors that affect it. The sociolinguistic and interactional methods are additional divisions of the sociolinguistic approach (Auer, 1984). Each method has a distinctive viewpoint on the origin of meaning. The broader view that the sociolinguist uses looks for patterns in how and why CS is used by different groups. Social norms are seen to be significant in CS. Instead of focusing on the norms, the interactional approach adopts a reverse perspective and examines the discussions. The individual is now the main focus instead of the community. The sociolinguistic perspective concerns the early theorists of CS (Blom & Gumperz, 1972). Early theorists proposed a sociolinguistic approach that looked at CS as coming from the internal motivation and purpose of the individual and the context that they found themselves in as a consequence of the interaction between the two approaches. The phrase "conversational code-switching" was first used by Gumperz (1982) to describe the process of switching between two languages during a conversation. Gumperz (1982) discovered that CS might be identified in several different ways. One of them was the use of a phrase in the other language as a quote or referenced speech; emotional outbursts; emphasis on a specific point; an interjection; explaining; differentiating between the general and the individual; and the expressing of personal opinion. According to the accommodation hypothesis, which was created by Giles et al. in 1987, CS is employed to win others' favour. Giles et al. (1987) backed Gumperz (1982)'s claim that CS may be used as a means of self-identification. Lack of CS may be a sign of social disfavour and distance (Giles et al., 1987). According to functional theorists, CS develops to bridge communication gaps, include others in dialogue, represent a person's bilingual identity, shift the course of a discussion, convey an attitude, and signal a change in communication direction (Appel & Muysken, 1987). Gumperz's typology was reflected in Appel and Muysken's (1987) typology (1982).

The Markedness Model

The Markedness Model of Myers and Scotton (1998) aims to provide a theory that combines the existing micro and macro theories. The model was built on the normative framework proposed by Fishman (1972). According to the normative approach, a multilingual community's established rules and norms are what lead to the usage of CS. The usage of CS or lack thereof reveals identification with or disassociation from the multilingual community. CS turns

become a way for the person to reveal their identity. As a result, speakers choose carefully how they utilise CS to communicate how much they respect the cultural norms of the bilingual community. The negotiation of one's identity may be accomplished using CS. The foundation of the Markedness Model lies in its maxims: The Unmarked Choice Maxim comes first on this list. According to this axiom, to belong to or associate with a group, a person must make a linguistic choice that is predictable and conforms to a group standard. Secondly, there is the Marked Choice Maxim. To create a new identity, the person in this instance chooses a CS that differs from the group norms. The Exploratory Choice Maxim comes in third place. This happens when it's unclear if certain employment of CS is permissible, thus CS is used to establish acceptability.

Conversational Code-Switching Approach

This approach is based on Gumperz's study (1982). The conversational code-switching method does not assume any preconceived standards that are followed in the usage of CS, in contrast to the markedness paradigm. As a result, CS needs to be examined in the context of the circumstances and interactions of the parties concerned. The interaction's CS sequencing is the main concern (Auer, 1995). Comparing this method to the markedness model is different. Norms are substituted with sequencing as the system for CS analysis. The conversation and the usage of CS are employed to generate social norms and relationship constructions rather than imposing norms and values. The usage of CS is seen as a deliberate decision made by the speaker to accomplish a particular goal. Discourse analysis provides the basis for comprehending CS, but the markedness model relies on comprehension of the social context to attribute significance to the usage of CS.

Advantages of Code-switch in the L2 perspective

Several earlier studies have found that CS offers learners significant advantages. The usage of CS can help students understand what they are studying, facilitate the development of more advanced communication skills, and assist them in learning L2 (Cook, 2001; Tang, 2002). CS can enable the students better comprehend terminology and express themselves (Larbah & Oliver, 2015). Furthermore, CS might indicate friendships, interactions, and cooperative partnerships (Larbah & Oliver, 2015). However, the usefulness of CS in facilitating a student to learn L2 in an EFL context has been disputed (Alshughithri, 2019). According to studies like Ellis (1984), Wong-Fillmore (1985), Chaudron (1988), and Lightbown (2001), the L2 learning context should be completely CS-free. On the contrary, researcher like Stern (1992), Cook (2001) and Levine (2011) believed that using CS improves students' study of L2 more effectively.

CS undertakes a variety of critical aspects. One of its functions, the directive function, is used to provide individuals with directions. In the classroom, this can include giving students instructions. CS also aids in enhancing comprehension and making meaning that might be hard to communicate clearly in L2. Both asking for and offering support may be done using CS. Students may utilize CS in the classroom to seek assistance in problem-solving. Time and effort can be saved by using CS (Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009). At the same time to cover the necessary information within the stipulated time, teachers might teach in L1 (Sharifian, 2009), but they may frequently correct learners using CS (Miller et al., 2009; Sharifian, 2009).

Contextual Studies

A great deal of significant research examining CS with Saudi Arabian students has been conducted, for instance, Larbah and Oliver's (2015) study of Saudi Arabian students' use of CS in ESL classes at Australian universities. The three major category roles of CS, as observed by the authors, were instructional, communicative, and social. The instructional purposes that were highlighted included strengthening vocabulary, enhancing comprehension, and fostering grammar. Previous studies by McLellan and Chua-Wong (2001), Metila (2011), Tognini and Oliver (2012), and Unamuno provided support for similar findings. The three identified communication functions were encouraging group interaction, fostering self-expression, and assisting learners in making requests for support (Larbah & Oliver, 2015). The social functions included establishing connections and expressing one's individuality (Larbah & Oliver, 2015).

In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the use of CS in L2 English classes was examined by Alshughithri's (2019), a study on the use of CS by 10 ESL instructors at a Saudi university and high school using observation, field notes, and audio recording. According to the study, CS fulfils the purposes of clarification, translation, facilitation of comprehension and understanding, language competence development, and giving clear teaching instructions. Al Tale and AlQahtani's study from 2022, which looked into students' preferences and attitudes about CS instruction, is another significant study in the Saudi Arabian setting. A questionnaire and interviews with 52 female students majoring in English at a Saudi institution were used in this study's mixed-methods methodology.

According to the findings, CS is essential in assisting students to learn, comprehend challenging ideas and improve their reading skills. Participants in the research preferred using CS to learn English than being taught only in their second language. They believed that L1-only lessons were less successful than ones that also included CS. Being allowed to use CS increased the Saudi female university student's self-assurance, which made learning English more satisfying and enjoyable. The student's level of stress was discovered to be reduced by the employment of CS. It was evident that learning in a combination of L1 and L2 was preferred. This study supported Al-Shammari's (2011). Studies involving Saudi Arabian students provide a large amount of evidence that students who are learning English believe CS is essential for enhancing their English proficiency. When employing communicative teaching techniques as suggested by Aoyama's research (2020) in a different cultural setting, CS was found to be important.

The student's stress level was shown to be lower because of the use of CS and being taught in a combination of L1 and L2 was preferred. The results of this study supported those of Al-Shammari (2011). There is a substantial amount of research showing that students studying English believe that CS is crucial for improving English proficiency, particularly among studies with Saudi Arabian students. According to Aoyama's research (2020), CS was shown to be crucial when applying communicative teaching methodologies in a diverse cultural setting.

Jdetawy (2011) examined to see how the Arabic students of the University of Utara in Malaysia used code-switching. The purpose of the study was to determine the driving factors behind CS usage as well as the extent to which interpersonal familiarity can influence CS employment. The most popular CS technique was tag switching, and participant familiarity did not influence how much CS was used. This investigation supported the outcomes of (Abalhassan & Alshalawi, 2000). Based on these results, Alluhaybi (2020) examined how six Saudi Arabian students studying in Canada used code-switching. According to the study, coding switching in both intrasentential and intersentential forms occurred roughly 400 times over the course of two hours. The majority of the CS consisted of intrasentential single nouns. The learners' CS was activated during a group conversation. When using CS, the Arabic speakers breached the equivalence of structural constraint.

Elsaadany (2003) carried out a study in the US to analyse the CS behaviour of nine males and eight females who were unaware that their conversations were being recorded natural social situations. CS occurrences were found after the recordings were transcribed. A sociocultural theoretical stance informed the research. The usage of CS in English stems from a linguistic requirement for unambiguous interpersonal communication. Elsaadany (2003) noted that it seemed as though linguistic restrictions were not relevant when CS was taking place. Al Masaeed (2016) examined CS in spoken discussions in a study abroad programme using a sociolinguistic approach. The conversational CS technique and the Markedness Model were employed in the study. According to this model and the conversational code-switching strategy, the researcher aimed to identify the types of conversational code-switching (CS) that were occurring (tag-switching, intra-sentential switching, and inter-sentential switching) as well as the purpose of CS. Certain propositions provided as study's foundation. The first was that linguistic (Hymes, 1972), grammatical (Chomsky, 1965), and contextual competence were prerequisites for communicative proficiency. The foundation of effective communication is CS. The second was that in a multilingual community, different language encounters should be seen as the norm.

3. Methods

Research Design

This inquiry used a qualitative design. Ten individuals were interviewed at the same time and location in the year 2022, the research was carried out in Memphis, Tennessee, in the USA.

Participants

A small Saudi community in Memphis comprised the sample. There were 10 participants—8 graduates and 2 ESL students—who were there temporarily to pursue their education in the United States. All of them intended to return to Saudi Arabia to start their careers on completion of their courses. All the graduate students had studied pharmacology except for one who had majored in English. The group members decided to schedule a meet-up on a bi-weekly basis depending on the schedules of this study, even though the meetings were arranged in public venues. Being from the same nation and are there for the same goal, topics of discussion often centered around sports, cultures, and academics. Even with informal topics, there was still formality because of the short duration of acquaintance.

Instruments

The researcher gathered data through in-person interviews as well as observations. All of the interviews took place at the same time and location. Eleven questions were designed to evaluate the respondents' clear perspectives on

code-switching as well as the overall group trends (see Appendix). Three different contexts were given to the respondents; one was actual (Memphis meetings), while the other two were made-up settings in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, respondents were asked to rate their level of English proficiency and offer their overall opinions on code-switching. To make it easy for the participants to choose their answers, a simple scale was employed. We used the qualitative research approach to assess the data once we had obtained it.

4. Results and Discussions

RQ1: How does code-switching relate to English proficiency level?

The results demonstrated that, based on their assessments, the respondents' English proficiency levels are high, except for two of them who claimed that their English proficiency was low because they recently enrolled in the University of Memphis' IEI program, which is classified as an ESL program. A high level of proficiency in two languages is one of the key factors that are theoretically predicted to increase the frequency of code-switching. It serves as the natural foundation for code-switching to develop, consciously or unintentionally. Contrary to what we expected, respondents' high level of English and Arabic proficiency had very little impact on the Saudi meeting group's code-switching frequencies. The majority of them stated that they did not often switch codes in the three specified contexts (the Memphis context, the Saudi context 1 and 2). We expect that code-switching may be prevented from developing in a monolingual setting in both Saudi situations due to the low English proficiency of many Saudis. It is difficult for listeners to comprehend a Saudi speaker who switches codes. Similar to Saudi contexts, the two meeting group members' limited English proficiency appeared to have a similar impact. The other members of the group seemed to be following a clear trend of having conversations in Arabic exclusively, allowing the other two to participate in these conversations and hear them in their entirety. Hu et al. (2022) indicated that elementary students' Chinese EFL learners code-switched less frequently than their intermediate learners, which validates the conclusions of this study. Additionally, Abalhassan and Alshalawi (2000) discovered that the degree of familiarity that Arabic learners in Malaysia had with one another had little influence on their CS. We believe that, in a larger context, the terms "community of practise," "participation," and "periphery" all apply to this circumstance but in the other approach. A group of fluent English speakers exists in Memphis, but they want to include the other two members, who are considered peripheral speakers, by giving up their competence and turning to a more welcoming inclusive Arabic community. Instead of allowing those two outliers to integrate into the community of fluent English speakers, the majority compromises on their shared values, such as refraining from code-switching for communication convenience.

RQ2: How do contexts affect code-switching?

In the three contexts that we studied, we aimed at exploring how different contexts may affect the rates of code-switching. The context of Memphis is based on the real meetings that members usually participate in on a bi-weekly basis. It is deemed to be informal although a slight degree of formality is observed because the meeting members had begun to know each other only recently and knew a little about each other's backgrounds. As for the two Saudi contexts, they were all imaginary and had two opposing formal and informal settings (unfamiliarity with people from different age groups in formal meetings vs. informal family meetings). Although the Memphis setting was, to a great extent, a fertile land to code-switch based on the fact that English is the language of the larger community, the majority of the meeting members were inclined not to code-switch except on very limited occasions. As for the other two imaginary contexts in Saudi Arabia, the majority of the members record low rates of code-switching. Before interpreting these results, it is important to point out that in the earlier members' meetings in Memphis, it had been noticed that code-switching rates were higher compared to the recent meetings. The earlier high rates of code-switching can be attributed to the academic nature of conversations that overwhelmed the talks. Medical terminology and jargons were predominant until some of the group members took the initiative and suggested not to bring these issues to light since they establish a formal environment of the meetings and thereby enhance code-switching. Such an initiative is believed to foster informality, which in turn fosters intimacy and solidarity among the group members so that they feel part of the group. It is also worth mentioning that in those early meetings, code-switching was accompanied by sarcastic jokes that were cracked either by those whose English proficiency was low or others who sought an informal environment of meetings. Alhourani, (2018) stated that CS is how multilinguists use two or more languages to make sense of their situation. Some scholars affirmed that the language learning environment should not permit students to switch codes (Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1984; Lightbown, 2001; Wong-Fillmore, 1985; Lightbown, 2001). On the contrary, researcher such as (Cook, 2001; Levine, 2011; Stern, 1992) as well as many contemporary research studies (Abalhassan & Alshalawi, 2000; Alluhaybi, 2020; Elsaadany, 2003) consider that the use of CS enhances the student's learning of L2.

Considering all the aforementioned complex actions and other cultural and personal views about code-switching, we

believe that in the Memphis meeting, a firm barrier was built to avoid any conscious or exaggerated code-switching. In reaction to the above attitudes, rates of code-switching have dropped down and members became more aware of this issue.

In the two Saudi contexts, low rates of code-switching were predictable. In severely monolingual situations or even bilingual ones, comprehensible communication is an urgent demand of participants. Otherwise, participation would be considered wasting of time if comprehensibility is not achieved. From this viewpoint, code-switching establishes an obstacle in the path of communicative comprehensibility. The magnitude of this obstacle goes up and down depending on the ups and downs of code-switching rates. This means that the more code-switching is, the less comprehensibility is and vice versa. This might be a reasonable explanation for the lower rates of code-switching. Code-switching among Saudis, though it is not generally preferable, might take some rational explanations. One of them is related to the prestigious status that the English language is usually linked to. Another one is when Arabic equivalent terms are not available.

In light of the previous interpretations, we understand why the majority of meeting members prefer not to code-switch in the Saudi context while one or two of them state that they often code-switch in all three contexts.

RQ3: Which type of code-switching is employed, and why?

Participants were given three answers and are asked to pick the most used when they code-switched. The three options, which are presented based on our observation, are one-word / “intra-sentential” type, sentence / “inter-sentential” type, and both types. The data shows that “one-word” is the most used option when the participants code-switch in all situations. It appears that picking one word is preferred when talks are about medical-related topics and this might be justified by the lack of finding proper Arabic equivalence. However, equivalence is not merely the reason behind “one-word” choice. It appears that using the English word helps transfer the idea easily and more accurately. This is understandable when the English words are technical such as computer, hard disk, internet, telephone, television, Facebook, and Twitter to name a few. Alluhaybi (2020) found that Saudi Arabian students who were studying in Canada code-switched nearly 400 times in two hours involving both intrasentential and intersentential forms. The study found that the majority of the CS was intrasentential in the form of single nouns. CS was triggered when the students were in a group discussion context. The Arabic speakers violated the equivalence of structure constraint when using CS.

It is worth noting that although “one-word” choice is the most used type, the rate of “one-word” use differs from one situation to another. In the Memphis situation, for example, it had a higher rate and this is, we think, because of the bilingual environment, which normally moves them to code-switch unconsciously. While the “sentence” type has a lower rate than “one-word” in the Saudis' community, it was always present when Saudis reported speeches and gave instructions. We believe that living the culture and socializing with native English speakers daily encouraged some speakers to use more than one English word at a time.

However, use of in the Saudi meetings dropped steadily in the last few weeks of observation. We think the major reason behind the decline was the explicit rejection by one of the ESL students who stated that he felt excluded and he wanted to participate in the conversations. After this incident, it is notable that use of English words was often associated with simple Arabic translation to simplify ideas, otherwise Arabic was the only sought language in the meetings to avoid embarrassing situations and keep the community more connected.

In the Saudi Arabia situation, the “sentence” type CS did not occur and there was only a “one-word” type switching though it was very rare due to some reasons. We assume the monolingual environment, which normally does not encourage using a language other than Arabic, is a major reason. Another reason could be false labelling. We mean that people usually have an idea that Saudis who use English in monolingual contexts are somewhat showing off and see other people from an ivory tower. English indeed has a prestigious status in Saudi Arabia, but many Saudis are not in favor of code-switching.

RQ4: How is the code-switching perceived by the users?

We aim to gain a general understanding of the Saudi group's perception on code-switching and whether they see it as a positive or negative characteristic by addressing this question. Although the group's perspective may not necessarily reflect the overall tendency among Saudis, it may serve as a key marker of the overall trend. The participants were asked to evaluate each statement on a five-point scale, from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” The results indicate that, even though they occasionally switched codes, all participants saw it favorably except one participant. The contrast between their broad perspective from the interviews—and their behaviour—observed, particularly at the initial meetings in August—is what makes this interesting. Elsaadany (2003), who said that language restrictions did

not seem to apply when CS was occurring, may have further supported this conclusion. Previous research claimed that CS was favourable. According to Al Tale and AlQahtani (2022), CS is essential for assisting students to learn, comprehend challenging ideas, and improve their reading abilities. Additionally, it was established that using CS reduces the students' level of stress (Shammari, 2011). According to Alenezi and Kebble's (2019) research, Saudi EFL students respected their professors more when they allowed both Arabic and English to be used in class. Students believed they had a good probability of passing the exam if teachers used both languages in class.

Given that many of the participants were pharmacologists who constantly code-switched and seldom ever had a meeting without talking about new medical terminology and health-related topics, everyone did not see code-switching as a beneficial component of being bilingual. Since the same culture is closely related to the Arabic language, we think that the high percentage of disagreement is a result of this. Arabic is not only the official language of Saudi Arabia and a representation of its culture; but also serves as the language of the Islamic faith, to which all Saudis adhere. Due to the close ties between the Arabic language, national identity, and Islamic identity, there is a complicated association that is used to assess people. In other words, national and Islamic identities are consolidated when more Arabic is employed. This could be the main factor in the poor perception towards code-switching. Saudi code-switchers are frequently criticised for speaking English in situations where only Arabic can be spoken, whether inside or outside of Saudi Arabia. This does not imply that speaking English is always unpleasant, but it does imply that it is not preferred unless necessary.

5. Conclusion

In the earlier investigation of code-switching, we engaged examined many the details so that to organize them and acquire a comprehensive, complete image of the interactions between code-switching, on the one hand, and the Saudi meeting members, on the other hand. Having done so, we can say that the entire meeting group is made up of four compound communities from a considerable distance. They appeared to have some common identities and at least one identification that sets them apart from one another. The Saudi community, where everyone shared the same beliefs, language, religion, culture, etc., is the first and largest community that unites all of its members. Meetings are held here, and everyone operates under the same parameters. Members of the second and third communities are either English proficient (8 members) or non-English proficient (2 members). When it comes to language functions, these two communities operate differently in terms of linguistic production, especially when it comes to code-switching. The fourth community has seven residents who went to a pharmacy school, making it a considerable community but not as large as the first. They have the same identity and tend to include information from their studies in meetings, which leads to frequent code-switching.

Code-switching emerged as a natural phenomenon adopted by these bilinguals when all four communities communicate utilising the most important interaction medium, i.e., language. Two group members who belonged to separate communities at the same time cannot carried out their roles in the meeting as required by the bigger communities. At the commencement of these meetings, a conflict of identities then started to appear on the horizon. Consequently, demonstrating support for a community that opposed code-switching and demonstrating concern for the cohesiveness of all communities' members to prevent their deconstruction, and to consolidate the members' trend toward operating within the boundaries of the umbrella community that represents all the members, code switching was dropped as a result of mutual agreement. The moderate rates of code-switching that we observed in our data, whether in the Memphis context or the two Saudi settings, are fully explained by this description.

6. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the sample of overseas Saudi nationals who were studying at Memphis. The findings of this study can not be fully generalized due to the various variable that might influence the process of code-switching for instance cultural background, level of education, age and so on, and which have not been a part of this study. The interviewees were not the same in terms of the course or program enrolled.

7. Recommendation of the Future Study

More research needs to be conducted on code-switching concerning educational level, degree programmes, age, gender, religion and culture. Further big sample size would give significant findings.

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Appendix

Interview Form

A) How do you evaluate your English level?

(Beginner) (Low Intermediate) (Intermediate) (Upper Intermediate) (Advanced)

B) In Memphis with our Saudi group meetings:

1. How often do you code-switch?

(Never) (Seldom) (Sometimes) (Often) (Always)

2. If you code switch, this is because:

(No equivalence) (Personal preference) (Context) (Reported speech)

3. If you code switch, the type is:

(One-word use) (Sentence use) (Both)

C) In Saudi Arabia with your family:

1. How often do you code-switch?

(Never) (Seldom) (Sometimes) (Often) (Always)

2. If you code switch, this is because:

(No equivalence) (Personal preference) (Context) (Reported speech)

3. If you code switch, the type is:

(One-word use) (Sentence use) (Both)

D) In Saudi Arabia with people you are NOT familiar with of different ages:

1. How often do you code-switch?

(Never) (Seldom) (Sometimes) (Often) (Always)

2. If you code switch, this is because:

(No equivalence) (Personal preference) (Context) (Reported speech)

3. If you code switch, the type is:

(One-word use) (Sentence use) (Both)

E) What is your opinion about code-switching?

(Totally disagree) (Disagree) (Neither agree nor disagree)

(Agree) (Totally agree)

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