# Functions of Code-switching in the Egyptian EFL Settings

Ayman Khafaga[1&2], Mohammad Saeed Bekheet[2], Hanan Maneh Al-Johani[1]& Iman El-Nabawi Abdel Wahed Shaalan[1&3]

[1] College of Science & Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia

[2] Faculty of Arts & Humanities, Suez Canal University, Ismailia, Egypt

[3] College of Humanities, Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt

Correspondence: Ayman Khafaga, College of Science & Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. E-mail: a.khafaga@psau.edu.sa

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**Abstract**

The main objective of this paper is to explore the alternation between languages, or what is recognized as the code-switching (CS) phenomenon among English language instructors in Egyptian universities. This is conducted by investigating the various purposes that might urge university instructors to code-switch between English and Arabic in their class interactions. This study, therefore, probes the extent to which code-switching is dexterously used in classroom discourse to communicate particular conversational and educational purposes pertinent to the teaching and learning process. Data are taken from 10 classes taught by five university teachers (two classes each) at the English Department, Cairo University. Data are collected through audio recordings of teachers' interactions in the class, and extracts from the participants' speeches are transliterated and analyzed. There are two overarching research questions in this study: first, do Egyptian university teachers of English code-switch? Second, what are the functions of teachers' code-switching in classroom interaction? Findings indicate that there are instances of code-switching in the discourse of all five participants at varying levels. Findings also reveal a variety of conversational and educational purposes triggering code-switching by the participants. Despite the fact that the findings revealed in this paper are solely thought to be relevant to CS among English language instructors in Egyptian universities, they can be further applied to other classroom discourses and in other EFL settings.

**Keywords:** code-switching, code mixing, English language teaching, classroom discourse, discourse functions, EFL teachers

## 1. Introduction

The code-switching (CS) phenomenon, or the alternation between languages, has drawn a lot of research interest. As a principal feature of bilingualism, CS has become an important aspect of foreign language teaching where both teachers and learners have access to two codes. CS is realized as a communicative strategy in 'English as a Foreign Language' (EFL) classrooms, especially in the teachers' discourse, despite the fact that it is not favored by many educators who advocate communicative techniques of teaching and oppose any kind of native language use in EFL classes (Sert, 2005). Modern approaches to teaching, especially the communicative approach, call for using the target language exclusively in teaching foreign languages, considering CS as a negative teaching strategy (Brown, 1994; Richards, 2002; Cook, 2008).

Ruan (2003), Üstünel and Seedhouse (2005), and Gearon (2006) have demonstrated that CS in foreign language teaching classrooms functions as a communicative strategy that serves to achieve social and academic goals. In his work on language choices in the foreign language classroom, Crawford (2004) stated that many teachers regard the learners' first language (L1) as the best and proper medium for conducting cross-lingual and cross-cultural comparisons. This indicates that there is a real tendency for code-switching to take place during foreign language teaching, as both the teachers and the students are fully aware of the linguistic resources available for them, and they simply try to manipulate such resources. Thus, CS in foreign language classrooms functions as a communicative strategy that builds a bridge and works as a facilitator rather than a blockage. In relation to language teaching in Egypt, this phenomenon has been relatively neglected by scholars and researchers, despite the fact that the question of whether instructors should utilize the first language ($L_1$) when teaching the second language ($L_2$) has long been controversial in Egypt. Hence, a study of CS in an Arabic-English context may provide more insight into the controversy by providing an understanding of the implication of CS among Egyptian university teachers of English.

The premise of the current study is that there are certain patterns that govern teachers' CS. This study examines the various functions of CS in an attempt to uncover the various purposes leading the teachers to switch languages. It explores the different situations that trigger teachers' CS in the classroom and the various motives behind this behavior. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to present a pragmatic account of English/Arabic code-switching behavior through teachers' discourse in Egypt. The study specifically attempts to find out appropriate answers to the following research questions:

RQ1. Do Egyptian university teachers of English code-switch?

RQ2. What are the functions of teachers' code-switching in classroom interaction?

The answer to the abovementioned research questions constitutes the main objective of the study, as it probes the extent to which CS is employed by Egyptian university teachers of English language and demonstrates the various discourse functions that lie beyond its usage.

The remainder of this study is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the literature review of the study by providing the relevant literature pertaining to the concept of cod-switching. Section 3 offers the methodology of the study by demonstrating data collection and description as well as the analytical procedures adopted in the study. Section 4 is confined to data analysis and results. Section 5 discusses the findings of the study. Section 6 concludes the paper and offers some recommendations for further research in the field.

## 2. Literature Review

Many empirical studies have approached CS from different perspectives by investigating this phenomenon in telecinematic discourse as a strategy effectively used in the fictional dialogue between interlocutors (Si, 2011; Monti, 2014), examining the way cultural identity can be developed by the employment of food-related CS expressions, particularly in terms of using CS from Malaysian into Chinese (John & Dumanig, 2013), discussing the extent to which CS, within media discourse, is influenced by certain social factors, including education, class, gender, and age of discourse participants (Aboelnabial, 2019), probing the way CS is utilized as effective strategy of communicating interpersonal relationships, such as solidarity and authority (Hapsari, 2020), and demonstrating the way CS expressions are translated in films, which, in turn, mirrors the degree of authenticity in fictional dialogue (Swandani et al., 2022). Within the scope of EFL teaching and classroom discourse, CS is further investigated from various analytical and theoretical angles. For example, by adopting both quantitative and qualitative methods to shed light on the advantages and disadvantages of using CS from the perspectives of both instructors and students (Yildizi & Su-Bergil, 2021), identifying the factors affecting CS use among EFL learners and the way in which CS influences the communication of their ideas positively (Masna, 2020), and offering new educational technologies for the employment and application of CS in EFL settings in order to improve learners' performance (Nguyen et al., 2022).

### *2.1 Code and Code-switching*

Within the scope of sociolinguistics, the term 'code' has generally been prominent as a label that is used to describe a language, a dialect, or a variety, that is to say, any language-based communication system (Crystal, 2008). It is observed that bilingual and multilingual speakers tend to switch or alternate between languages or language varieties depending on the needs of given communication circumstances (Bussmann, 1996). This language alternation tendency is referred to as code-switching and is occasionally described as code-mixing, code-shifting, or style-shifting. This describes the switch made by bilinguals and, sometimes, bidialectal speakers, either between two languages or between standard and other sub-standard varieties of a language. This behavior of language switching usually occurs depending on the conversational situation, setting, and participants (Crystal, 2008).

The definition of code-switching varies depending on such factors as the structure of the switches and the nature of the switching itself. CS may be described generally as the alternation between two varieties or languages within the same conversation or discourse (Gonzales-Velásquez, 1995; Lipski, 1985; Myers-Scotton, 1988; Poplack, 1980). Different terms are used to refer to this phenomenon, ranging from code switching or code mixing to language alternation or language shifting. For the purpose of this research, the term 'code-switching' is adopted to refer to this alternation between two languages (English and Arabic in this context). Some definitional issues clarifying any distinction found between code-switching, borrowing, or code-mixing are highlighted in the following section.

### *2.2 Code-switching, Code-mixing, and Borrowing*

Although the expression 'code mixing' is sometimes used synonymously with code switching, some studies distinguish it from code-switching, giving it new meaning. Mansour (2000) highlights the difference between code-switching (CS), which is mainly inter-sentential, and code-mixing (CM), which is intrasentential, describing the use of single lexical items or phrases of one language embedded in sentences or clauses of a different language. Kumar and Narendra (2012) differentiate between inter-sentential code-switching occurring at clause or sentence boundaries and the more complex alternation identified as code mixing, which is basically intra-sentential. It takes place within sentences and clauses as opposed to inter-sentential CS, where each clause belongs to a different language.

Poplack (2004) highlights the difference between code-switching and other language contact phenomena such as lexical borrowing. He indicates that loanwords become lexicalized and used consistently in the recipient language, and that knowledge of the origin language sometimes disappears. Loanwords form part of the lexicon of the borrowing language. They tend to be commonly used by monolingual individuals in the community of the borrowing language. Loanwords become adapted to the phonological and structural patterns of the recipient language, despite the fact that they exhibit the same etymology of the donor language. Code-switching differs from borrowing as it involves the phonology and structure of the two languages, whereas loanwords do not reflect the morphological and syntactic structure of the donor language.

### *2.3 Functions of Code-switching*

Code-switching is a widely observed phenomenon that is especially realized in multilingual and multicultural communities (Sert, 2005). Miscellaneous studies have explored the various linguistic and cultural functions of CS in bilingual and multilingual communities and the different strategies manipulated by speakers who are observed to alternate between languages (Chung, 2006; Field, 2005; Hasbun, 2001; Ruan, 2003). In an attempt to specify the reasons that might cause a speaker to switch codes, Wardaugh and Fuller (2015) suggest various factors, including solidarity, accommodation for listeners, and perceived social distance. They add that speakers tend to appeal to their audience "by orienting their speech toward others through code choices" (p. 99).

Gumperz (1977) presents a range of conversational functions of code-switching. This includes: a) quotations, when speakers code-switch to deliver direct quotations from other languages or to report speech in a different language; b) addressee specification, to direct the message to a certain addressee, like when a speaker turns to address someone who is not engaged in a conversation; c) interjections, where the switch marks an interjection or sentence filler; d) repetition, to clarify a message or emphasize a certain point; e) message qualification, when switches consist of qualifying constructions; and f) personalization versus objectivization, which is related to the speaker's involvement in or detachment from the message. Ng and He (2004) present another function referred to as 'interpretive CS' where speakers try to explain or repair the conversation when they have difficulty expressing an idea. This particular function serves to resolve problems of 'non-understanding'. There are four other types of CS, namely referential, directive, expressive, and phatic functions, used to communicate ideas (Anindita, 2023).

Furthermore, Appel and Muysken (1987, pp. 118-120) suggest a range of motives for CS use, including: (i) *Referential function* caused by a lack of language competence (code-confusing); (ii) *Directive function* to exclude certain persons from (portions of) the conversation, like children and buyers; (iii) *Expressive function* to emphasize a mixed identity; (iv) *Phatic function* to change the tone of the conversation (private-official, friendly-hostile); and (v) *Metalinguistic function* to impress others with language skills. Grosjean (1982) provides a thorough overview of the factors that influence language alternation in bilingual and multilingual contexts. Language choice is usually determined by a combination of several factors.

Table 1. Grosjean's (1982, p. 136) list on factors influencing language choice

**FACTORS INFLUENCING LANGUAGE CHOICE**

| *Participants* | *Situation* |
|---|---|
| Language proficiency | Location/Setting |
| Language preference | Presence of monolinguals |
| Socioeconomic status | Degree of formality |
| Age | Degree of intimacy |
| Sex | |
| Occupation | *Content of Discourse* |
| Education | Topic |
| Ethnic Background | Type of vocabulary |
| History of speakers' linguistic interaction | |
| Kinship relation | *Function of Interaction* |
| Intimacy | To raise status |
| Power relation | To create social distance |
| Attitude toward languages | To exclude someone |
| Outside pressure | To request or command |

*2.4 English-Arabic Code-switching*

Within the context of CS in the Arabic communities, Jdetawy (2011) observed Arabic-English CS through daily encounters among Arab students at a Malaysian university. The findings indicate that the majority of Arabic-English switches by Arab students mark the lack of Arabic equivalents of the English words, leading students to code-switch. Within an Algerian setting, Manel (2010) examined code-switching among university students of English. The study explores the language alternation between Arabic and English or French. Students are observed to switch between their native language, whether standard or Algerian Arabic, and the foreign language, English or French. They implement code-switching and code-mixing in their discourse when they try to discuss a variety of topics. Farghal et al. (2023) investigated the use of code-switching (CS) in an Arabic food competition setting. The study examines how CS is employed by English-Arabic speakers and translated on television. The results reveal that males tend to code-switch more than females and that intra-sentential CS is more recurrent among participants.

*2.5 Code-switching in Classroom Discourse*

Pan and Pan (2010) present an argument in support of the use of L1 in classrooms where the content is delivered in a foreign language.

Their work reveals that L1 is considered an efficient learning tool for students and a supplementary medium for good teaching as well. Teachers utilize L1 to reinforce knowledge that students have acquired, while students use L1 to overcome any difficulties they might face as a result of their limited language skills or low proficiency level. Reviewing the strengths and limitations of the implementation of CS in teaching English from teachers' and students' perspectives, Yildiz and Su-Burgil (2021) investigated classroom discourse in Turkish high schools. The study reveals the students' approval of code-switching as a communicative tool and the teachers' attitude to plan and balance language alternation for both communicative and pedagogical purposes. In a different teaching context in an Algerian university, teachers showed negative attitudes towards English-Arabic CS in the class as they preferred the exclusive use of the target language while teaching (Adder & Bagui, 2020).

In a study exploring the factors that influence EFL learners' code-switching, Masna (2020) concluded that learners resorted to CS as a helpful interactive strategy to convey their thoughts and that switching is influenced by the interaction type and the selected topics. Teachers too are found to implement CS with classroom discourse as a useful teaching strategy that promotes students' understanding and helps develop their competence (Mahyuni, 2019). Al-Qasi (2019) conducted a study in Oman to explore code-switching in higher educational institutions, suggesting that CS is an effective approach in higher education contexts. The findings reveal that both educators and learners show positive attitudes towards using CS in the class. Goodman and Tastanbek (2021) addressed the application of code-switching and translanguaging in English language classrooms. They suggest that teacher educators need to implement intentional translanguaging pedagogies in their teaching where English is the target language.

On investigating the functions of code-switching in EFL classrooms, a range of educational and communicative functions are revealed to be manipulated by either teachers or learners in the classroom context. Such a range of functions includes motivating, cultural orientation, negotiation, hesitation, reiteration, address specification, repetition, topic switching, and affective functions, among others (e.g., Bilgin, 2019; Fahira, 2022; Harahab, 2020).

## 3. Methodology

Before the main exploratory fieldwork, a pilot study was conducted on three teachers. The results of the pilot study revealed that the subjects code-switch at different frequency levels. The questions investigated in the pilot study are also investigated in the main study.

### *3.1 Design of the Study*

This study is exploratory in nature as it is based on observations of CS strategies detected in teachers' discourse through classroom interaction. The data for this study are taken from 10 lessons given in the English Department, Cairo University. The lessons are selected from classes taught in the postgraduate program in the two majors: literature and applied linguistics. Three of the courses given by the teachers were taught in the Applied Linguistics division; the other two were in the Literature division. The English Department offers a one-year program for postgraduate studies in two sections, literature and applied linguistics, for learners who major in English as an undergraduate degree. This program offers ten courses for each section, six of which are elective. The Pre/MA program is the highest level of formal education offered at Egyptian universities.

### *3.2 Sampling*

The sample for this study consists of five university teachers who are native speakers of Arabic. The data are collected from two classes for each teacher. Both the group of interest and the number of people to be included in the sample are identified in advance, non-randomly. It is a criterion-based selection strategy resembling quota sampling. The group of interest includes teachers of pre-MA courses in linguistics and literature. Five participants from both divisions are included in the sample. The sampling procedures are as follows: a list of the 18 instructors at the pre-MA courses was prepared, and five teachers were selected conveniently; those whose courses are available to be attended and feasible to be recorded.

Table 2. Data sampling information

| Participant | Gender | Division | Academic rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Female | Linguistics | Assistant professor |
| 2 | Female | Linguistics | Associate professor |
| 3 | Female | Literature | Full professor |
| 4 | Female | Linguistics | Professor Emeritus |
| 5 | Female | Literature | Associate professor |

### *3.3 Data Collection*

The research instrument used to collect the data for this study is the spontaneous output. Data are collected by the researcher and two volunteers. The data are collected by audio recording two classes for each teacher. Recording is conducted by the researcher and two volunteers without revealing the main purpose of the study in order to get spontaneous and uncontaminated data. After collecting data, the main purpose of the study was revealed to the teachers. The confidentiality of the participants is guaranteed, as their identities are kept anonymous.

## 4. Data Analysis

Since detecting the phenomenon of code-switching is the main focus of the present study, a qualitative analysis is conducted describing the various functions of CS as well as the teachers' attitudes towards such a phenomenon. The qualitative data examine the motives behind the teachers' CS, investigating any psychological factors involved. This section displays the results obtained through the main instrument implemented in this study: spontaneous observation.

The data reveal various motivations for code-switching. It is realized that the participants switch codes in their classroom discourse for different purposes to fulfill various functions, some of which are conversational and others are primarily for pedagogical goals. The major functions detected in the participants'/teachers' discourse are summed up into four main functions: 1) message qualification (elaboration), 2) translation or reiteration (repetition for clarification), 3) reducing social distance, and 4) interjections (gap fillers). In addition to these four major functions of code-switching, there are other less recurrent functions that were detected in the collected data. Among these functions is the use of the mother tongue as a 5) compensation strategy. This function serves conversational purposes in the first place. Other reasons for code-switching are pedagogically-based, as they are typical of teaching-learning contexts. Such functions include: 6) firm reproaches, 7) negotiating cultural relevance, and 8) dealing with procedural issues.

The following subsections discuss the significance of such CS functions and the motivation behind this behavior on the part of the participants.

### *4.1 Message Qualification*

One of the most frequent purposes of switching codes is message qualification or elaboration. It is detected in the collected data that many of the participants resort to code-switching in order to elaborate on what is immediately mentioned in the other code. They switch codes from one language to another to modify what has been said, ensuring a better understanding of the delivered message. This function is elaborated on through the following extracts:

Extract 1

> There are certain phonetic characteristics we'll speak about in the perception: perception, *"we howwa ʔessam' aw ʔelʔedra:k 'an ṭariiʔ ʔessam' "* [and it is listening or perceiving through listening]. There are certain phonetic characteristics that make a stressed syllable prominent ……. prominent... you hear it in sound, *"wa yuqṣad bil prominence ʔelli benʔuuluh dah; ʔel buruuz fi ṣṣoot"* [and what is meant by 'prominence' which we discuss here is the stress in sound].

In the above extract, the participant switches codes at certain intervals of her discourse. She attempts to enhance comprehension by explaining certain points in the native language (Arabic in this case). The instructor first introduces some academic terminologies and then proceeds to define and explain the terms in Arabic. She does not provide the definitions in English and then translate them into Arabic. Instead, she gives the students the terms in the target language and then elaborates on them in the students' first language. She first introduces the term 'perception' in English and switches into Arabic after that in order to explain what is meant by that term. The second instance of message qualification in this extract is the elaboration of the term 'prominence'. The teacher mentions this aspect through her discussion and then explains it in Arabic. It is noticeable here that in her explanation, the teacher mixes the two varieties of Arabic: modern standard and simplified Egyptian.

Extract 2

> There are particular sounds in the foreign language will sound all the time as if they are not native from the point of view of the foreign language [sic]… "hunaak taʔthiir lillogha elʔom fi ta'allom ʔalloghaat elʔagnabeyya." [there is an influence of the mother tongue on learning a foreign language]

As shown in this extract, the participant/teacher switches to Arabic at the sentence boundary. She attempts to enhance comprehension, not by redefining a certain point in the native language but rather by adding new relevant information. She elaborates on her view concerning sound differences among languages by mentioning the influence of the mother tongue on learning a foreign language. The Arabic switch at the end of the English sentence helps highlight the main point of discussion and clarifies what was mentioned earlier in the other code.

### *4.2 Translation or Reiteration*

The analysis of the collected data reveals that, in many cases, the participants or teachers resort to translation or reiteration in their classroom discourse for different purposes. Whereas some use this technique to enhance comprehension and overcome misunderstanding, others apply it just as a kind of spontaneous expression. As a means of explanation, some of the participants translate the important terms and definitions to Arabic in order to clarify meaning or provide their equivalent in the mother tongue to create a kind of connection in the students' minds. It is also recognized that some participants resort to reiteration, i.e. repeating the same words in Arabic to clarify what they said earlier in English. Mansour (2000) indicates that this function of code-switching should be considered 'unmarked' since successful communication may require it. However, the data yield significant instances of translation or reiteration that are introduced and analyzed through the following examples:

Extract 3

> It will still have to pass through chambers to be produced *"lessah ʔoddaamuh sekkah."* [it still has a way to pass.]

The participant in this example resorts to reiteration as she states a fact about the topic of discussion in English and then repeats it in Arabic. The Arabic switch serves as a rephrasing of the statement in English. It is an incomplete translation of the English sentences, as the word *"sekkah"* replaces the phrase "pass through chambers." The teacher reiterates to affirm meaning and get students to follow up.

Extract 4

> *"ya'ni momken ʔelwaaħed yeʔuul"* [so, one can say] I don't know, *"ma'rafsh"* [I do not know].

The structure of this utterance resembles that of the previous one, except for the fact that Arabic represents the matrix language here. The participant/teacher code-switches to English, then back to Arabic again, reiterating the English switch "I don't know." The Arabic switch *"ma'rafsh"* towards the end of this utterance represents a literal translation of the English words and is applied mainly for emphasis. Reiteration here is not used for any pedagogical purposes but rather represents a rhetorical strategy, thus marking a spontaneous manner of expression on the part of the teacher.

Such examples of CS that represent academic translation of items and terminology in the target language are very common in the context of teaching. Mansour reflects on this feature and views:

> This type of CS can only be understood when seen in relation to the functions of each language in the teaching discourse: English – the prescribed language of instruction, Arabic – the normal language of communication between Egyptians. For one thing, translation may occasionally be necessary (Mansour, 2000, p. 65).

*4.3 Reducing Social Distance*

Code-switching may be utilized to foster deep interpersonal interactions among multilingual community members, thus introducing an essential social function. In this respect, Sert (2005) believes that among individuals who share the same ethnicity or socio-cultural identity, CS is considered a helpful medium that may enhance linguistic solidarity. This is achieved by reducing the social distance among them. He argues that this phenomenon also carries affective functions that serve to express emotions. Commenting on such an affective function, Skiba (1997) states that code-switching is a useful communicative strategy accessible to bilingual and multilingual speakers, and it allows an individual to express a range of attitudes and other emotions successfully. Switching to another language, then, allows speakers to increase the impact of their speech and use it in an effective manner. The data of the present study indicates the use of CS for such purposes of solidarity through reducing the formality of the situation, reducing social distance, and creating a more favorable learning context. The following extract highlights this function of reducing social distance in various learning situations and contexts.

Extract 5

> "*ṭab men neħyet el*" [so, in terms of] morality *"baʔa wel"* [and] integrity is it black and white *"walla fii"* [or is there a] grey zone *"kedah benel'ab fiiha walla eeh!"* [that we play in, or what!] According *"baʔa"* [then] to Henry James, *"mafiish el"* [there is no] grey zone "di" [this]

In an attempt to reduce the sense of formality and create a more favorable learning context, the teacher resorts to the use of the mother tongue in the above extract. The participant's speech is marked with Arabic-English code mixing as she alternates between both codes while discussing a matter related to the main topic of the course. She aims at getting her students involved and creating a closer image in their minds concerning the point she is discussing. To achieve her goal, the teacher uses Arabic back-channel markers such as baʔa 'بقة'; kedah 'كده'; tab 'طب'; and walla eeh 'ولا ايه'. Such markers serve to eliminate any sense of detachment from the side of students, ensuring more involvement in and a better understanding of the topic of discussion. The participant simply switches to the code that appeals more to the students, and this helps, in turn, to reduce social distance and ease communication.

*4.4 Interjections*

This function of code-switching involves the use of discourse markers and tag words and phrases to mark sentence fillers, as in the insertion of the Arabic filler *"ya'ni"* (I mean) in a completely English utterance. This interjection or tag functions mainly as a gap filler to compensate for a missing word in the other code or just to join stretches of language together in a typical manner of cohesive ties. Such markers and tags serve mainly to reduce the formality of the situation, and the use of such interjections indicates the spontaneity of expression on the part of the speakers. The following examples explain such a spontaneous expression mode, highlighting the function of such discourse markers and tags in the participants' discourse.

Extracts 6

a) *"ṭab'an"* [of course] they have to give you the folders that include all these papers every time they hand in an essay.

b) *"ṭayyeb"* [ok then] what is the situation?

c) *"liʔan"* [because] they make the issue of random assignment.

The above set of examples represents the use of interjections or tags in order to introduce a new clause or sentence. Such gap fillers function as conjunctions in such contexts, introducing the new information to be added to the discussion. In this sense, they serve to highlight the forthcoming utterances.

Extracts 7

a) Convenient sampling is looked at under the qualitative paradigm … why? … because of the issue of 'generalizability' *"ya gamaa'a"* [guys].

b) She wants to say something, and whatever the answers are, she's happy with it *"we khala:ṣ"* [and that's it].

Unlike the first set of examples, the tag phrases and words in this group of utterances occur at the end of English clauses to serve the function of commenting. The participants switch to such Arabic back-channel markers at the end of their utterances to add a concluding remark on the preceding speech, marking the content of the message being conveyed.

Extracts 8

a) I'll stop *"masalan"* [for example] correcting the essay.

b) If you are interested *"ba'd kedah"* [afterwards] in pursuing your MA and your PhD.

c) Do you think it is suitable for beginners *"walla"* [or] they should have added something more?

d) I'm still debating *"ya"* [either] two questions you choose one, *"ya"* [or] three questions you choose one.

The above utterances are mainly in English, which provides the main syntactic structure, while Arabic tag words and phrases are inserted intrasententially, adding to the internal coherence of the utterances. In examples (a) and (b), the Arabic tags function as parenthetical expressions, representing side remarks that add to the meaning of the text. The interjections '*walla*' and '*ya*' in examples (c) and (d) replace two English conjunctions and serve as gap fillers, indicating the spontaneous manner of expression on the side of the speakers.

Extracts 9

a) What is proofreading "*baʔa*"?

b) Not focus on it "*ya'ni*".

c) "*bas*" definitely there will be choice.

Such tags as baʔa 'بقة'; kedah 'كده'; ya'ni 'يعنى'; tab 'طب'; bas 'بس' in the above examples are Arabic-specific, as there are no direct English equivalents for such words. They may occur initially, medially, or finally, highlighting the English utterance. The participants usually insert such tags and markers unconsciously in their discourse. The only marked purpose for the use of these interjections in the above contexts is to reduce the formality of the tone and attract the students' attention.

*4.5 Compensation*

According to Crystal (1987, cited in Skiba, 1997), bilingual speakers alternate between languages as a compensation strategy they resort to when they have difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings in one of the languages. A speaker may resort to code-switching to overcome any possible linguistic deficiency by selecting the code that fulfills the interactional goal. This usually takes place when the speaker is irritated or distracted. Crystal argues that in conversational situations where speakers feel hesitant and uncertain about how to express themselves in the second language, they instinctively tend to resort to their native language as a more secure code that helps speech flow smoothly. He then concludes that code switching is a supplementary conversational strategy rather than mere language interference. It is recognized that some of the participants in the present study apply code-switching as a compensation strategy from different perspectives, as illustrated in the following extracts.

Extract 10

> *"ya'ni momken ʔelwaaħed yeʔuul"* [so, one can say] 'I don't know', *"ma'rafsh"* [I do not know], but it's better than *"ʔelly beyefti"* [who says what he or she is not sure of]: 'I know', but what he or she knows is incomplete, imperfect, not accurate.

The code alternation presented here signifies a lack in the linguistic repertoire of the speaker, as she could not find an appropriate linguistic form to express the meaning she is trying to convey. The teacher uses the Arabic phrase *"ʔelly beyefti"* to fill in a possible gap in her speech, since there is no certain direct equivalent of such a phrase in English. In order to avoid any probable linguistic failure, the participant decides to resort to the other code available to her in order to guarantee the successful delivery of her message. Thus, CS does not interrupt discourse but rather helps supplement speech.

*4.6 Firm Reproaches*

The collected data display another possible use of code-switching as a demonstration of firm and more effective reproaches. According to Gabusi (2005), instructors sometimes switch to their native language to express anger, frustration, and displeasure. In such instances, code-switching is employed affectively, and that may render various interpretations. On the one hand, switching to the mother tongue can be viewed as a natural and more convenient choice to express sudden emotional reactions, and this usually occurs unconsciously. On the other hand, when instructors reproach students in the mother tongue, this emphasizes the seriousness of the remark. This function of reproaching is better explained in the following two extracts:

Extract 11

> You have to use journals, to bring articles from journals and from periodicals, and you read more books "ʔennama dah mayenfa'sh; ʔelkalaam ʔelli entuh bite'miluuh dah mayenfa'sh". [but this is not going to work; what you actually do is not going to work.]

Extract 12

> That's what I expect when I give you the topic for next time, that you have to go and do some research … *"ʔomma:l hatektebu zzaay!"* [or else how are you going to write?]. This what post-graduate studies mean … that you do research … *"ʔennama ħna nektefi bel text elli ħna bnakhdu we khala:ṣ"* [ but you just study the text that we are taking and that's it], this is not what post graduate students do; *"fahmiin walla laʔ!"* [do you get it or not].

Extracts (11) and (12) represent a practical demonstration of such affective uses of CS that are related to firm reproaches. The participant/teacher in the above extract is directing her students to the right way of conducting research, and in doing so, she uses the target language (English in this case) to deliver her message. Along the course of her speech, she switches to the students' mother tongue, addressing them in Arabic in order to rebuke them for not working hard enough. Her decision to switch codes may arise from the need to leave a powerful and effective impact on the students. Such expressions as *"ʔelkalaam dah mayenfa'sh"* and *"fahmiin walla laʔ!"* serve to increase the intensity of the reproach and get students to realize the seriousness of the message. Perhaps such effectiveness of the reproaches could not be achieved if conveyed otherwise in the target language, English in this case.

*4.7 Negotiating Cultural Relevance*

One of the code-switching functions uncovered in the participants' class interactions is the switch to relate a topic of discussion to the everyday life of the students, in what could be referred to as 'negotiating cultural relevance', as Canagarajah (1995) describes it in his study on the functions of language alternation in Sri Lankan English language teaching (ELT) settings. The results of his study indicate that both teachers and students switch from English to Tamil to tackle a variety of culturally relevant topics. This may include anecdotes, jokes, or content clarification. The function of alternating languages in this case is to interactively communicate with the students to achieve the target of the conversation and illustrate the content. The following two sets of extracts illustrate thoroughly how such a strategy provides a good opportunity to fulfill the lesson goals, achieve involvement, and enhance communication as well.

Extract 13

> For example, you are in the middle of an exam... one of the invigilators... writes the answer on the board… everybody copies the answer but you didn't do that because it's against your sense of integrity; you are not going to cheat. *"ṭayeb"* [ok then], what is the situation? *" 'ala fekra ʔana baʔolluku ħaaga men wa:qe' ʔel ħayaah"* [by the way, I am telling you something that really exists in life]. My son was in primary three I think, *"kaanet shehaada waʔtiiha, kaanu byakhdu mawaad egtema'eyya, we galhom suʔaal*…" [It was considered a certificate at that time; they were taking Social Studies and they had a question…]

What the teacher discusses in the above extract is a theme related to the course being studied. She elaborates on that theme in English, the code used as the tool of academic communication. Then, she switches to Arabic in order to discuss a personal incident which, helps elaborate and support her point of view. The participant aims at getting the students more involved by referring to a culturally relevant situation that is recurrent in their environment. This relevance is introduced in the participant speech when she stresses the fact that such incidents take place in real life: *" 'ala fekra ʔana baʔolluku ħaaga men wa:qe' ʔel ħayaah"*. This helps raise the students' interest in what is being discussed and clarifies the topic of the class.

Extract 14

> *"ʔay waaħed mennena ..... lamma yiigi yet'allem logha ʔagnabeyya law fiiha similar sounds lel sounds betaa'et el native language beta'tu hayenṭaʔha kwayyes: ʔel* /b/ in English is found in Arabic, *ʔel* /f/ *kazaalek* ....." [anyone of us, when learning a foreign language, will pronounce its sounds appropriately if they are similar to those of his or her native language: the /b/ in English is found in Arabic, and so is the /f/]

Another situation of cultural relevance is expressed in this extract as the teacher discusses sound differences among languages. She explains a theoretical, abstract point in English related to the influence of the mother tongue on learning a foreign language. She, then, attempts to clarify such abstractness by relating this point to the students' case of being Arabic speakers learning English. The switch to Arabic is not to discuss a general issue in life related to the topic of the class; the shift serves to provide practical application of the abstract point. It is a kind of culturally relevant explanation that highlights the main topic of the class.

*4.8 Dealing with Procedural Issues*

In the context of teaching, instructors may inevitably switch to the mother tongue for certain pedagogical purposes, such as classroom management. Üstünel and Seedhouse (2005) argue that the teacher may switch codes as a repair strategy to overcome any procedural issue that can hinder the institutional achievement. Thus, CS serves an educational function to ensure that students understand the instructions thoroughly. Teachers may also code-switch to dispel confusion about tasks. It is detected in the data that the participants usually switch into Arabic when giving instructions about final exams to clear any ambiguities and dispel all confusion about the exam. They use the students' mother tongue to guarantee maximum comprehension. Examples of such procedural issues are represented in the following:

Extract 15

> *"we ṭab'an ʔeħna 'amalna"* [and of course we've discussed] three novels, *"fa"* [so] definitely *"ʔel"* [the] questions *"hayebʔa fii*

*ħaaga ʔennuh"* [will include something that is] trying to bring them together. *"hayebʔa ya ʔemma hayḍom ettalaata"* [it will either include the three] together, *"ya ʔemma hayebʔa suʔaal waʔollak"* [or it will be a question and I'll ask you to] illustrate from two of the three. *"ya'ni ħaaga beħeeth yeddiiko"* [so, it will be something that gives you] scope *"te'melo"* [to make] analysis comparing one aspect in the three or two aspects in one *"ʔaw ħaaga kedah ya'ni"* [or something like that].

This extract represents a procedural pattern as the teacher illustrates the form of the final exam to the students, describing the type of questions and directing them to the best way of handling such questions. She wants to clarify any ambiguities and dispel all confusion about the exam, and this drives her to switch to Arabic in order to guarantee maximum comprehension. She alternates between both languages to introduce the instructions clearly and to get students to follow up. Hence, English serves to structure the questions, whereas Arabic switches help clarify the content and attract the attention of the students to what is being discussed. Thus, she constantly gets them alerted to what she is saying along the course of her speech.

**5. Discussion**

The data collected for the current study show that all five participants resorted to code-switching (CS) in their classroom discourse at varying levels. Based on the analysis of the data, it is clear that the participants switch codes for various reasons and purposes. Some of these reasons serve certain pedagogical functions in the classroom, whereas others indicate the use of CS as a communicative strategy that supports interaction. The major and minor functions of CS in all the participants' speeches are summed up and presented in Table 3, which also displays the functions that motivate each participant individually to switch languages in her own classroom discourse.

Table 3. Functions of code-switching in the Egyptian EFL classes

| No | Participant / Function | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Message qualification | √ | √ | √ | | |
| 2. | Translation or reiteration | √ | √ | √ | | |
| 3. | Reducing social distance | √ | | √ | | √ |
| 4. | Interjections / gap fillers | √ | | √ | √ | √ |
| 5. | Compensation | √ | | | | |
| 6. | Firm reproaches | | | | | √ |
| 7. | Negotiating cultural relevance | | √ | √ | | |
| 8. | Dealing with procedural issues | | | √ | | |

Table 3 shows that the five participants use CS for particular reasons, including fostering the process of comprehension on the part of learners, making them feel safe and at ease, stimulating learners' academic potential, grabbing their attention, and helping them get acquainted with their culture. The various functions targeted by the use of CS strategies serve to facilitate the process of teaching and learning, which in turn functions to achieve better learning outcomes. Within the scope of EFL teaching and learning, CS strategies are information carriers, gap-filler devices, message qualifiers, communication and participation motivators, and face-threatening softeners.

The analysis of the selected data also demonstrates that 4 out of the 5 participants tend to switch in order to fill a gap in their speech in what is referred to as interjections. The use of Arabic back-channel markers and tag words and phrases is cited clearly in the discourse of these four participants, which serves to reduce the formality of the situation and create a more favorable learning context. This also signals the spontaneous nature of the participants' code-switching as they repeatedly insert such markers and tags within their English utterances for no specific pedagogical purposes but rather to sound more informal and familiar too. Thus, using switched utterances as interjections or gap fillers is a major CS function, which correlates with the findings of other previous studies (e.g., Gumperz, 1977; Bassiouny, 2009; Hassan, 2019; Fahira, 2022), whose contributions accentuate the pragmatic dimension beyond the use of CS among interlocutors in general and within EFL contexts in particular.

It is analytically evidenced that the tendency to qualify the massage and to translate or repeat what is said represents another reason for code-switching for three of the participants. This agrees with what Hamid (2016) stated in his study. When discussing topics related to the content of the course, the teachers might face puzzled students who find difficulty following up. As a result, teachers resort to code-switching when there are some words or terms that need to be emphasized or drawn attention to. Similarly, instructors switch to one language to highlight the importance of the topics under discussion. Such factors are significant in relation to teaching and pedagogy since emphasis is a very important factor that directly drives participants to switch languages to the one that guarantees the delivery of the message successfully. Three participants apply CS in order to reduce the social distance between them and the students. This would enable them to develop rapport with their students. Other motivations for CS are detected in the data while observing classroom discourse. Some of these motivations are: discussing culturally related topics, explaining a procedure, and reproaching students. Another noteworthy finding was that, in university EFL classrooms, the use of the mother tongue was employed not only for classroom management but also for language analysis, presenting grammatical rules, talking about cross-cultural issues, providing instructions or prompts, clarifying errors, and testing comprehension.

The frequent employment of code-switching within EFL settings mirrors the EFL teachers' realization of their students' learning and communicative needs. This reconciles with Alenezi's (2010) argument that teachers should use a code switch if they notice that their students are struggling to use the second language. This will help the students become more confident and willing to participate in the

class. Learners' code-switching serves several purposes, including floor-holding, repetition, equivalency, and dispute resolution. Equivalency serves as a protective mechanism that allows students to carry on with conversation without interruptions caused by inadequate second language proficiency (Alenezi, 2010). The findings of this study further correlate with Mortega's (2022) contention that code-switching can improve academic language proficiency by encouraging students to participate in discussions and aiding in their learning. Students can better understand and acquire new vocabulary, lexicon, and syntax through code-switching.

The findings of this study reinforce the outcomes of recent research addressing the socio-cultural functions of CS (e.g., Bilgin, 2019; Fahira, 2022; Hamid, 2016; Harahab, 2020). The socio-cultural orientation, therefore, is a fundamental purpose targeted by CS in the EFL classes. Crucially, shifting to the learners' mother tongue in order to present certain aspects pertinent to their culture creates a feeling of solidarity and group membership, which further functions to foster the whole teaching and learning process. The varied range of conversational and pedagogical functions of CS elicited from the participants' discourse indicates the role of CS as a communicative tool in classes where the content is delivered in a foreign language. This research, hence, supports Almelhi's (2020) view on the significance of researching the functions of CS within EFL settings to reveal further pragmatic and discourse functions pertaining to the employment of CS among classroom discourse interlocutors.

## 6. Conclusion

This study has presented a pragmatic account of English-Arabic code-switching in an educational setting in Egypt. The study indicates that teachers' CS follows certain patterns and principles that are uncovered for readers through the current research. It is elicited that teachers' CS is spontaneous and used generally as a communicative strategy in classroom interaction to fulfill several communicative as well as pedagogical functions. It is analytically demonstrated that the varied range of conversational and pedagogical functions of CS elicited from the participants' discourse indicates the role of CS as a communicative tool in FL classes. CS is observed to be a successful strategy applied by teachers in the classroom to serve different purposes. The findings of the present study contribute to two related fields of linguistic research. On the one hand, the study adds to the literature on bilingual communication, and on the other hand, it gives insights into English language classrooms in relation to pedagogical concerns.

Significantly, the present study contributes to the literature of linguistic research in different ways. It helps raise Arabic speakers' awareness of the various functions of code-switching. This, in turn, highlights the importance of applying such a process as a communicative strategy by teachers in English classrooms in order to achieve more successful communication. The researcher also aims to contribute to the literature on $L_1$ and $L_2$ use by providing a descriptive account of CS that focuses more on what teachers actually do in practice than on what teachers should do. This study also has a pedagogical perspective, since it addresses one of the basic areas of study in the field of English language teaching. The study helps teachers of English recognize important sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic aspects of code-switching and avoid negative attitudes that could lead to communicative disruption. Having traced the important role code-switching plays in facilitating learning, the present study calls for considering CS as a successful means of communication rather than rejecting this process as a disfavored technique of teaching.

### *6.1 Limitations and Recommendations*

One of the major limitations of the study is the technique of selecting the participants. Although the Egyptian participants in the study represent a relatively varied sample, they were not randomly selected. Due to issues of confidentiality and willingness to participate in the research, all the participants were selected conveniently. Furthermore, code-switching was observed only at one Egyptian university by a small number of instructors. Hence, future research should investigate code-switching in the discourse of a larger number of instructors at different Egyptian universities. Another striking limitation is that the rates and percent of code-switching in Egyptian teachers' classroom discourse were not estimated. If the entire number of English-Arabic switches had been measured, the functions of code-switching could have been more thoroughly identified. Further research could measure the rates of CS functions by quantifying the total number of switches as compared to the whole utterance and calculating the percentage of the implemented code-switching functions.

Finally, for future research, this paper has some recommendations. First, similar studies concerning CS practices should be replicated in other teaching contexts to give useful insight into developing EL classroom pedagogy. Second, there is a need for more studies investigating the impact of CS on the students of the English language and their attitudes towards such practices by the teachers. Third, further empirical studies are recommended to probe the extent to which the employment of the different types of CS is effective in classroom settings, particularly in terms of the attained learning outcomes. These studies might reveal similar and/or different findings than those approached in this paper.

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**Authors' contributions**

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No additional data are available.



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**Appendix 1. List of transcription symbols**

The following symbols are used to represent Arabic consonants and vowels for the phonemic transcription of data.

| Arabic sound | Symbol | Description | Arabic sound | Symbol | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ء /أ | ʔ | Glottal, stop, voiceless | ض | ḍ | Alveodental, emphatic stop, voiced |
| ب | b | Bilabial, stop, voiced | ط | ṭ | Alveodental, emphatic stop, voiceless |
| ت | t | Alveodental, stop, voiceless | ظ | ẓ | Interdental, emphatic fricative, voiced |
| ث | th | Fricative, interdental, voiceless | ع | ' | Pharyngeal, fricative, voiced |
| ج | g<br>J | Velar, stop, voiced<br>Alveopalatal, fricative, voiced | غ | gh | Uvular, fricative, voiced |
| ح | ħ | Fricative, pharyngeal, voiceless | ف | f | Labiodental, fricative, voiceless |
| خ | kh | Fricative, uvular, voiced | ق | q | Uvular, stop, voiceless |
| د | d | Alveodental, stop, voiced | ك | k | Velar, stop, voiceless |
| ذ | dh | Fricative, interdental, voiced | ل | l | Alveodental, lateral, voiced |
| ر | r | Alveodental, trill, voiced | م | m | Bilabial, nasal, voiced |
| ز | z | Alveodental, fricative, voiced | ن | n | Alveadental, nasal, voiced |
| س | s | Alveodental, fricative, voiceless | هـ | h | Glottal, fricative, voiceless |
| ش | sh | Alveopalatal, fricative, voiceless | و | w | Labio-velar, glide, voiced |
| ص | ṣ | Alveodental, emphatic fricative, voiceless | يـ | y | Palatal, glide, voiced |

**Vowels:**

| Arabic Vowel (short) | Symbol | Arabic Vowel (long) | Symbol |
|---|---|---|---|
| فتحة | a | عاد /'aad/ ا<br>عار /'a:r/ ا | aa<br>a: |
| كسرة | e / i | عيد /'iid/ ي<br>عين/'een/ ي | ii<br>ee |
| ضمة | o / u | عود /'uud/ و<br>يوم /yoom/ و | uu<br>oo |

**Appendix 2. Notes on transcription**

1. English is transcribed orthographically, while Arabic is transliterated into the English alphabet. A rough English translation is also given.

2. Transliterated data are represented in *italics*, and the English translation is given between square brackets [ ].

3. Pauses: A short pause is indicated by … and a long one by ……

4. Ungrammatical items are indicated by: [sic].

5. For the glottal stop ( ء 'hamza'), the symbol (ʔ) is used.

6. In Arabic, there is a tendency to double some consonants in the pronunciation of some words (gemination or 'shadda'). In such cases the symbol will be written twice.

7. Some aspects of connected speech, such as assimilation and linking, are not represented in the Arabic transliteration in order to avoid any kind of ambiguity. This is done with some examples of the glottal stop occurring initially.