Seeking Gender Differences in Code-Switching by Male and Female Medical College Students in a Saudi EFL Class

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to determine the types of code-switching when used by male and female students during their interactions in the English classes. This research was conducted at Jazan University in Saudi Arabia. This is a mix of quantitative and qualitative research. For data collection, observation, recordings and transcriptions were used in order. Based on the data analysis, both genders used the three types of code switching as classified by Poplack (1980) during their interactions in the EFL classroom. Based on the analysis, the total frequencies of code-switching types are 408 by male students and 428 times by females. The results will help in language teaching education and will help teachers during their in-service training to code switch in a way that gives the students more motivation and understanding to participate in the class. Moreover, the findings of this study will show the commonly used types of code switching and their frequencies in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia by each gender. Moreover, the gender differences in code-switching will be investigated in different classrooms - according to their gender – not in mixed classes.

Keywords: Codeswitching, bilingualism, gender differences, EFL classroom

I. Introduction

Code-switching is a common practice that occurs primarily in communities where individuals speak multiple languages or come from diverse cultural backgrounds. This term came into existence in the beginning of the 20th century. In such communities, individuals commonly utilize multiple languages simultaneously for various reasons and in diverse ways. Academics examined code-switching from various angles, including sociolinguistic, grammatical, and psycholinguistic viewpoints. The concept of "Code-switching" was unclear until Gumperz began publishing new studies either alone or in collaboration with others in the 1960s and 1970s, including (Gumperz,1964, 1967; Gumperz and Wilson, 1971; Blom and Gumperz, 1972). Later on, code-switching gained recognition and researchers began to acknowledge its significance for further investigation. Poplack (1979, 1980) were two examples of these studies which dealt with codeswitching. Polack (1979) classified codeswitching into three types: inter-sentential, intra-sentential and tag-switching. However, it is important to analyze code-switching from various perspectives because it carries multiple layers of importance. This research was design to address the following questions:

1. What are the types of English – Arabic code switching used by male and female medical college students in a Saudi EFL classroom?

2. How frequently do male and female medical college students code-switch from English to Arabic in a Saudi EFL classroom?

II. Literature Review

The Motives to study Code switching:

There are many motives to study code-switching. Firstly, code switching is an inevitable and common phenomenon in all bilingual and multilingual communities. Second, it deserves studying because there are varied combinations of languages that happen in many societies and communities as well as inside the EFL classrooms (Auer, 2013; Gumperz, 1982; Nilep, 2006). These types of code-switching need to be investigated according to different communities (Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Heller,1988; Poplack,1980; Stockwell, 2007; Wardhaugh, 2006). Moreover, the attitudes towards code-switching vary from one community to another and from one person to another also. This difference in attitudes depends on many factors such as gender, language proficiency, age, and culture. Therefore, attitudes towards code-switching need to be pointed out in light of these factors (Fareh, 2010; Jianjun, 2014). In addition, code switching can be studied from the student's or the teacher's point of view because each one has his own perception for codeswitching (Borlongan 2009).

Over the last few decades, there was a strong debate about code switching in classroom. Some researchers such as (Chambers, 1994; Enama, 2016; Krashen, 1982; Taha, 2008) supported the theory of teaching using the target language exclusively inside the classroom They see that using the first language (L1) will affect the progress of acquiring the target language (TL) negatively and students should be exposed to the target language only to develop a suitable environment for the target language acquisition. They also gave some solutions for teachers in the classroom to avoid using L1 by making use of the visual aids or their body language to help them introduce any difficult vocabulary to students.

Types of Code switching:

Bilingual speakers use several types when they code switch from one language to another. The classifications of these types differ from one scholar to another. (Socarraz-Novoa, 2015). Researchers identified different types of code switching from different study approaches.

Poplack is a pioneer in this field. She is one of the greatest scholars who first studied code-switching and classified it into three main kinds. Poplack (1979 & 1980) categorized code switching into inter-sentential code switching, intra-sentential code-switching and tag switching. Inter-sentential code switching occurs outside the sentence or the clause level. On the other hand, intra-sentential code-switching occurs within the same sentence or the clause. Meanwhile, tag-switching could be noticed at the end of the sentence. Here are some examples for each type from Spanish to English (Poplack,1980):

- Inter-sentential code-switching:

"Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish y terming en español [sic] ('and finish in Spanish')". (Poplack, 1980:219)

- Intra-sentential code-switching:

"Why make Carol sentarse atras pa' que (sit in the back so) everybody has to move pa' que se salga (for her to get out)?" (Poplack, 1980:214)

- Tag switching:

I could understand que (that) you don't know how to speak Spanish. verdad? (right?) (Poplack, 1980:221)

Gender physical segregation in Saudi Arabia:

As a custom, Saudi Arabia established a gender-segregated education system. All schools or universities campuses are built for either boys or girls only. This custom still exists until now as a kind of conservatism. As a result, girls have their own campus and female teachers. On the other hand, boys have their separate campus and male teachers. As an exception, you can find male teachers on girls' campus in case of lack of teachers. In such a case, the male teacher teaches using video conferencing system. He can't see the girls, but they can see the shown slides or the board he writes on. (Baki, R., 2004)

7.1 The effect of gender on the attitude towards Code switching:

Gender is one of the most important sociolinguistic categories that have a great importance. The interaction between gender and the linguistic performance has increased in the research field. The modern studies are profound and precise unlike the 1970s studies that made shallow generalizations. It is not necessary to have a

direct relationship between gender and code-switching, but you can find many researches that dealt with some variables that relate to gender in many ways, such as the female discourse strategies and politeness. In monolingual settings, there is one long-established outcome that women always use standard language more than men, while code-switching between standard and non-standard dialects. Many studies have been carried out to show any correspondence between gender and the amount or type of code-switching. The findings were different and opposite; some showed clear difference and others showed no difference according to gender. (Gardner-Chloros,2009)

Firstly, Auer (2013) had written about "the social meaning of bilingual talk". He mentioned that women or men may have positive attitudes towards code-switching in order to achieve a social identity. He adopted Gumperz's classification of the strategy of code-switching. Gumperz stated two ways for code-switching: "We code" and "They code". "We code" is the strategy of code-switching but the dominant language or variety you use is that one which resembles you, your group or your belongings. Oppositely, "They code" is the strategy of code-switching but your dominant language or variety is that one which belongs to other different people, class or identities. In that case, the speaker doesn't use his own variety or language, to have a status in the social hierarchy. For example, women can code-switch to English or use standard variety to show that they are educated or probably they are against or in the favor of an idea.

In accordance with that view for code-switching and from a sociolinguistic perspective, (Farida et al., 2018) has shown that people tend to code-switch from one language to another to achieve communicative goals. In Pakistan, they speak Urdu as a national language side by side with another local language or variety. The educated people have the skill to speak English as a third language. It is noticed that women in Pakistan have a positive attitude towards code-switching from their native language to English to have a status as educated ones. This attitude towards code-switching to use English is natural even among males, but it is strongly noticeable among females. This strong attitude for code-switching is highly adopted by the Pakistani woman to achieve a different social status from men or children. In brief, code-switching is her tool to show gender identity. In her study, Farida et al studied the code-switching phenomenon among some Pakistani women who speak the local "Sindhi" language as well as English. After having interviews and some recordings, it was clear that women have a positive attitude to use English even if the English sentence has the same meaning as Sindhi sentence. According to Blom and Gumperz (1972), that is called "situational code-switching". Some other women used some English expressions to send a message to the listener implied in the uttered words. According to the same classification of Blom and Gumperz (1972), this kind of code-switching is known as "metaphorical switching". The findings of study showed that most of women have the attitude to use situational switching more than metaphorical switching.

There are some studies that linked gender with the attitude towards code-switching. Some studies investigated the attitude towards code-switching in general. Some others sought to identify the type of code-switching preferred by each gender.

In the study of (Dewaele & Wei: 2014) there was a significant effect of gender on the attitude towards code-switching. The findings showed that female participants tend to code-switch more often than males. The study didn't check the preferred type by females.

Susylowati, E. et al., (2019) carried out a study on two Islamic schools in Indonesia. The two Islamic schools are for girls only. They made a research to identify the most common type of code-switching among schoolgirls. After collecting the data, the study showed that inter-sentential switching type was used mostly by girls. Girls at school switched from and to English but their attitude towards inter-sentential switching was more than intra-sentential or tag-switching. The percentage of inter-sentential switching was 48.8% out of the overall data. On the other hand, intra-sentential and tag-switching were 28.8% and 22.2% respectively. A great gap in percentage of the attitude -towards inter-sentential switching and tag switching and intra-sentential switching - was noticed in the study.

Surprisingly, Alenezy, (2016) had another study to find the relationship between gender and attitude towards code-switching in Northern Borders University in Saudi Arabia. He had a sample of about 189 students (111 males and 78 females). The study found that both males and females are willing to code-switch, and they both have a positive attitude towards code-switching. On the contrary, there was no significant difference between male and female students in choosing the type of code-switching.

All these contradicted findings are normal and shouldn't be surprising because these studies were carried out in different communities. This notion matches the argument of (Swigart :1991) who believes that gender is something which is not agreed on even in one society as we can't see all women behave similarly or use the same language or variety. In fact, gender can't be separated from society's identities and beliefs. Gender has its meaning, restrictions and expectations that go with the social culture. As a result, to have a study related to gender in a community, you will have a different finding according to the social variables in that community.

In this study, we are going to have separate groups according to gender (males & females). All Saudi universities already have two separate campuses: one for males and another one for females. The attitudes towards types of code switching are going to be investigated according to each gender to find out if there is a specific type of code-switching that is commonly used and preferred by each gender separately. Some studies were carried out on both genders but not in a separate environment; both genders were in the same class.

III. Methodology

The current study attempts to discover the impact of gender on the frequency of code-switching in EFL classes made by Saudi male and female university students. As mentioned at the introduction, this study follows Poplack's (1980) definition of code-switching.

Most of the studies reviewed in the literature review section reported a significant difference between males and females in the rate of code-switching (e.g. Babou 2021, Gulzar et al. 2013, Ismail 2015, Kane 2020). Therefore, the current study considers that gender is a sociolinguistic variable that may influence the rate of code-switching in EFL classes.

The current study follows the aforementioned definition of Poplack (1980). Hence, the alternation from Arabic to English or vice versa in classroom by male or female students will be counted as an example of code-switching and will be classified according to Poplack (1980).
The participants of the research were female and male medical students at Jazan University, Saudi Arabia. One EFL classroom from the female campus will be chosen, and another classroom from the male campus will be chosen also to be audio-recorded.
This study used both qualitative and quantitative research design which explored the male and female students' types of codeswitching and also the frequency of their code switching in EFL classes. To achieve the research objectives, some classes will be audio recorded for the male and the female students in their respective campuses. These recordings will be transcribed to identify the types of codeswitching made by the male or the female students. Accordingly, the frequency of each type will be counted.

IV. Results and discussion

The codeswitches were counted and categorized using Poplack's (1980) classification after transcribing ten lectures for each gender. The findings were recorded in two tables, as shown below.

The female students
1. **Table (4.1) Female codeswitching in 10 lectures**

Types of CS	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	Total	
Intra-sentential	13	30	14	45	47	38	18	55	39	35	**334**	78%
Inter-sentential	5	6	3	5	6	4	21	12	7	4	**73**	17%
Tag-switching	0	1	2	3	6	2	4	1	1	1	**21**	4.9%
TOTAL	18	37	19	53	59	44	43	68	47	40	**428**	100%

The frequency of the types of codeswitching used by female students revealed that all the three types of codeswitching were used by the female students. Moreover, the intra-sentential type was used more frequently than the other two types. They code switched 334 times in intra-sentential type, but only 73 and 21 times in inter-sentential and tag-switching, respectively. The difference in frequency between the intra-sentential type and the other two types is very large and significant. Consequently, the tag-switching type is the least used. This finding that females codeswitch more in the intra-sentential type than the other two types is consistent with (Kane's, 2020; Huang et al., 2020) findings and contradicts (Susylowati et al., 2019). See table (1).

The male students
Table (4.2) Male codeswitching in 10 lectures

Types of CS	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	Total	
Intra-sentential	10	20	26	10	36	40	46	39	50	54	**331**	81.1%
Inter-sentential	2	2	3	8	0	12	6	12	14	12	**71**	17.4%
Tag-switching	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	**6**	1.47%
TOTAL	12	22	29	20	36	54	53	52	64	66	**408**	100%

The frequency of the forms of codeswitching used by male students revealed that all the three types of codeswitching were used by the female students. Moreover, the intra-sentential type was used more frequently than the other two types. They code switched 331 times in intra-sentential, but only 71 times in inter-sentential and 6 times in tag-switching. The difference in frequency between the intra-sentential type and the other two types is very large and significant. The tag-switching kind is the least used as it was recorded only 6 times, which is a very low frequency. This result contradicts the findings of Kane's (2020). See table (2).

Comparison between the two genders
In general, the two genders code switched using the three types of codeswitching as classified by Poplack (1980). The total codeswitches of the female students was a bit more than the male students. To illustrate, the females codeswitched 428 times, but the males codeswitched 408 times. The difference between the two genders in the total frequency isn't big or significant. That means both the males and the females are almost identical.

Female students scored 334 times on the first type of codeswitching (intra-sentential codeswitching), whereas male students scored 331 times. As a result, they're almost identical. Although female students utilized intra-sentential codes more frequently than male pupils, the difference was not statistically significant. Both genders had the highest intra-sentential codeswitching frequencies. To clarify, females used the intra-sentential type for 78% of the total codeswitches. Male students, on the other hand, used the intra-sentential type for 81.1% of their total codeswitches. The two gender percentages are quite high, accounting for more than three-quarters of the total frequencies for each gender separately.

Females produced an inter-sentential type of codeswitching 73 times. Males were reported 71 times, with a slightly lower frequency. Although females codeswitched more, there isn't a significant difference between the two. As a result, both genders are nearly identical. For female and male students, the percentages of code switching are 17% and 17.4%, respectively. These two percentages are far too low when compared to the intra-sentential type rates for both genders.

In terms of frequency of tag-switching, it was discovered that this type of codeswitching was employed the least of the other two types. Female students codeswitched 21 times, which corresponds to around 4.9% of all female frequencies. Male students, on the other hand, codeswitched in tag-switching only 6 times, accounting for only 1.47% of total male frequencies. Although the females codeswitched far more than males, the two gender percentages are so modest in comparison to the other two types of codeswitching.

To sum up, the two genders were almost alike because both of them used the intra-sentential type of codeswitching the highest, then the inter-sentential and the least was the tag-switching type. Moreover, the frequencies of each type for both genders were very similar. To explain, for both genders, the most used type of code switching as classified by Poplack (1980) was the intra-sentential type and the least used type was the tag-switching. Consequently, the two genders have no statistically significant differences.

V. **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this research, it is clearly found out that there is no significant difference between male and female medical students at Jazan University in terms of gender towards codeswitching. To illustrate, both genders had almost the same total frequency of codeswitching in the EFL classroom. Pertaining to the frequency of each type of codeswitching, both genders had the same order of types according to their frequency. To explain, the most common type of codeswitching was the intra-sentential, then the inter-sentential and finally, the least one was the tag-switching type. These findings are helpful to the teachers as well as the decision makers in the field of education. These findings can help them to choose the best teaching methods that suit the students' learning preferences. In addition, it helps the teacher in the class to choose the best strategies that match the students' preferred learning styles.

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