

## Instructors' Code Switching, Use and Functions in the ESP Classes: A case Study of the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Aden

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to investigate the functions of instructors' code switching in the ESP class of the first level at the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Aden. This aspect is investigated through data collection through a mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) through a questionnaire, for the students and an interview, for the instructors, techniques. The study demonstrates a number of functions of code-switching used by instructors. These functions are: explaining ideas, emphasizing important ideas, giving students advice, caution, notification, and direction, clarifying speech, saving time, discussing information that could be more similar to that in Arabic, repeating messages, making difficult topics more interesting, improving students' participation, drawing students' attention, adding explanations, bridging the social gap, and filling in pauses caused by memory lapses. All of these functions are primarily strategies to meet students' communication needs for facilitating the comprehension of medical courses. This study provides a number of recommendations and suggestions to improve the quality of teaching and benefit the students and get along with the use of English as a medium of instruction.

**Keywords:** Code-Switching, Medical Courses, Function, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Aden.

**Introduction:** In the past, code switching was a primary focus in sociolinguistic studies related to foreign language teaching. Recently, it has garnered a significant attention and has become a widespread phenomenon, and is considered a distinctive linguistic feature of bilinguals and multilinguals. Wardhaugh (2006) claims that, code switching is often utilized by people who are bilinguals and multilingual. Its occurrence is not limited to informal settings but extends to various formal environments, including educational institutions, serving several functions. According to Yusuf (2009), code-switching is frequently observed during the process of learning foreign languages, particularly when studying English, due to diverse backgrounds and reasons. Likewise, Sert (2005, p. 1) states that "in ELT classrooms, code switching comes into use either in the teachers' or the students' discourse". Despite its prevalence, the functions of code-switching have not been comprehensively explored in the sociolinguistic field. Even at higher levels of education, teachers continue to utilize code-switching to fulfill various purposes. This research investigates the functions of instructors' code-switching in the ESP classes at the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Aden.

### Statement of Problem:

According to Mahdar and Pawar (2020, p. 30), "English language was taught as a foreign and compulsory language in schools, but it was taught as official medium of instruction before and subjects are produced in English too". English is also used as a medium of instruction for Medical, Engineering and Science in most of the universities except the university requirements courses

(Arabic language and Islamic Culture). It also used for communication between instructors and students in medical facilities and hospitals. Medical English differs from that taught in the humanities, being distinctly scientific and tailored for medical purposes. Consequently, instructors in medical courses must be familiar with medical terminology, which are of Greek or Latin origin. The utilization of code switching in disciplines such as medicine remains a contentious topic in current teaching practices, where English is the medium of instruction, arises questions such as: 'Why do instructors employ code-switching within a single conversational context? and, what function can instructors' code-switching serve?'. This situation led to the study of the use of code switching and its functions by instructors at the first level of the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Aden in medical lectures and seminars.

### **Research Questions:**

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What functions are served by instructors' use of code switching in their academic medical English lectures and discussions?
2. Which functions are mostly served through utilizing code switching?

### **Significance of the Study:**

The study is significant as it investigates the use of code switching in the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Aden, which has not been investigated before. English is the medium of instruction but code switching is practiced in class both by the instructors and the students but it has not been a focus of any scientific study. The study is important for the university administration, curriculum designers, instructors and students as it provides insights which potentially enhance the positive impact and mitigate any negative repercussions associated with code-switching in the learning process. Understanding the functions and effectiveness of code-switching can empower instructors to adopt appropriate techniques in medical education settings, particularly within Faculty of Dentistry, to facilitate effective communication and deepen students' comprehension of medical concepts.

### **Limitations of the Study:**

The study is limited to the use of code-switching and its functions by the instructors and the students of level one, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Aden during the Academic year 2021-2022. The sample of the study represent two groups; the students, from which sixty-seven, randomly selected to participate in filling the questionnaire and three instructors, selected purposefully and interviewed.

### **Review of Literature:**

#### **Definition of Code Switching:**

Code-switching involves individuals transition between languages within the same context. It is commonly observed in bilingual and multilingual societies, where individuals employ two or more languages interchangeably. Scholars from various disciplines, including sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and structuralism, have contributed to defining code-switching.

Vogt (1954, p.368) posits that "Code switching in itself is perhaps not a linguistic phenomenon, but rather a psychological one, and its causes are obviously extra-linguistic", suggesting its roots extend beyond linguistic factors. From a sociolinguistic perspective, Gumperz (1982, p.59) describes code-switching as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems". Meanwhile, Grosjean (1998, p. 131) views code-switching as "a total switch from one language to another, of any level of word, phrase, or sentence", emphasizing its comprehensive nature across linguistic units. This study is different from the studies of Vogt (1954), Gumperz (1982) and Grosjean (1998) as it

focuses on the use of code-switching by instructors inside the classrooms in the Faculty of Dentistry, the University of Aden.

### **Functions of Code-Switching:**

Code-switching serves various functions in linguistic communication, particularly in educational contexts where English serves as the medium of instruction. Gal (1988, p. 247) characterizes code-switching as a "conversational strategy used to establish, cross, or destroy group boundaries; to create, evoke or change interpersonal relations with their rights and obligations". Gumperz (1982) identifies six functions of code-switching: quotation, addressee specification, interjection, reiteration, message qualification, and personalization versus objectification. Holmes (2013) outlines four functions: solidarity, participant, status, and topic.

Hussein, et al. (2020, p.63) argue that functions discussed by Ferguson (2009) are "clarifying unfamiliar concepts, summarizing a certain idea, greeting and interacting with students". Choong (2006, p.2) notes that "Some reasons for using the L1 in the classroom are to convey and check the comprehension of lexical or grammatical forms and meanings, to give directions, and to manage the class". Macaro (2005, p69) asserts that code-switching is used for building personal relationship with the learners, giving complex procedural instructions for carrying out the activities, controlling learners' behaviour, translating and checking and enhancing their understanding and teaching grammar explicitly.

Abalhassan and Alshalawi (2000) indicate that there are seven functions of code-switching used by bilingual graduate Saudi students in the United States, including emphasis and contextualization cues, parallel constructions for emphasis, quotations and random switches, technical terms, conversation tags, linguistic repertoire, and politeness and avoidance of taboo expression. In the same context, Al-Makoshi (2014) used the code-switching as a facilitating tool in the classroom for the purpose of improving and supporting students' understanding and their academic performance.

Similarly, Alkhawaldeh (2019) suggests that teachers' code-switching is used for affective function, giving instructions and directions, emphasizing lessons, translations, and classroom management, particularly in response to the lack of linguistic incompetence. This study is not similar to the studies of Gal (1988), Gumperz (1982), Holmes (2013), Hussein, et al. (2020), Ferguson (2009), Choong (2006), Macaro (2005), Abalhassan and Alshalawi (2000), Al-Makoshi (2014) in studying the main functions of code-switching such as (Clarifying ideas, managing the class, reducing the students stress, repeating the same concept or explaining it in the mother tongue, asking questions, checking for understanding, emphasizing, developing vocabulary, discussions of tasks and giving comments and feedback) and where they are used. None of these studies is carried on the university courses in Yemen or the University of Aden. This makes the present study different, as it is carried on the use of code-switching in ESP courses in the Faculty of Dentistry, the University of Aden, Republic of Yemen. The purpose of this study is to find out the extent to which code-switching is used by tutors as well as the students and suggest some solutions to avoid this phenomenon in the higher levels' courses.

### **Research Methodology:**

This study focuses on the use of code switching and its functions by first level instructors and students, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Aden. The study uses the mixed research method methods to collect the necessary data; a questionnaire and an interview. The questionnaire is used for collecting data from students. Whereas, the interview is used for collecting data from the instructors during the academic year 2021-2022. The collected data is analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 23<sup>rd</sup> version for Windows.

### Analysis of the Data:

The necessary data is collected through a questionnaire and an interview. The following is the analysis of the data:

#### a. The Questionnaire:

From the results of the questionnaire, it is found that, students confirmed that instructors use code switching to fulfill various functions. Approximately 88.6% of respondents noted that code-switching occurs when instructors explain unfamiliar ideas difficult to articulate in English. Similarly, 86% indicated that instructors switch languages to offer advice, guidance, caution, notifications, and directions. About 85.4% stated that code-switching is used for clarifying speech content, and similar percentage said that, it is used to emphasize important ideas and save time. Additionally, 84.6% noted that code-switching is used while discussing topics related to Arabic or local situations, whereas 84.4% recognized that it is used for repeating the same message conveyed in English for better understanding of the medical concepts. About 83.6% observed that code-switching is used to make difficult topics more interesting and reduce students' stress, while 80.6% of the participants stated that it is used to enhance student participation. Furthermore, 80% agreed that code-switching is used to draw attention to what instructors are saying.

**Table1: The mean score and standard deviation of the variables representing the functions served by instructors' code-switching.**

N0	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	percentage	Degree
9	Putting emphasis on the important idea under discussion.	4.25	0.773	4	85%	Strongly agree
10	Drawing your attention to what the instructor is saying.	4.00	0.632	9	80%	Agree
11	Making difficult topics more interesting.	4.18	0.792	7	83.6%	Agree
12	Explaining the ideas that you are not familiar with and difficult to explain in English.	4.43	0.787	1	88.6%	Strongly agree
13	Lessening your stress and anxiety of a heavy- content lecture	4.18	0.792	7	83.6%	Agree
14	Bridging the social gap and building trustful relationship between you and your instructor.	3.50	1.04	11	70%	Agree
15	Substituting a known word for an unknown word in the target language.	3.93	0.899	10	78%	Agree
16	Using translation as a strategy for defining the difficult medical terms.	1.66	0.838	14	33.3%	Strongly disagree
17	Adding comments or explanations.	3.93	0.899	10	78%	Agree
18	Quoting the speech of others.	1.30	0.000	13	40%	Disagree
19	Clarifying the speech content for interlocutor.	4.27	0.710	3	85.4%	Strongly agree
20	Filling in the pauses in a conversation caused by memory lapses.	2.30	1.19	12	46%	Disagree
21	Repeating the message from one language to another to make sure that you understand the topic of the discussion.	4.22	0.783	6	84.4%	Agree
22	Giving you advice, guidance, caution, notification and direction.	4.30	0.766	2	86%	Strongly agree
23	Improving your participation in the conversation	4.03	0.991	8	80.6%	Agree

24	Discussing information that could be more similar to that in Arabic.	4.23	0.810	5	84.6%	Strongly agree
25	Saving time as it takes long time to explain the same idea in English.	4.25	0.773	4	85%	Strongly agree
The general mean and standard deviation		3,70	0.0490	-	74%	Agree

### b. The Interview:

The analysis of the data collected through the interview shows that instructor highlighted several key functions of code-switching in the educational process. These functions were categorized based on their perceived importance, including linking information, facilitating understanding, reducing students' anxiety, enhancing motivation, repetition, emphasizing concepts, providing examples, giving instructions, explaining unfamiliar terms, utilizing students' knowledge, drawing attention, and translation.

### Findings and Recommendations:

From the analysis above, it is found that the code-switching is used by both the instructors and the students for: better understanding of the students of new medical concepts, reducing the stress in the classrooms, explanations of the medical words and providing further examples. These findings come in line with the previous studies (Gumperz, 1982; Hussein, et al., 2020; Ferguson, 2009; Choong, 2006; Abal hassan and Alshalawi's, 2000; Al-Makoshi, 2014; and Saed and Haider, 2020) on the functions of teachers' code-switching in the classroom. Moreover, instructors emphasize the importance of arranging these functions based on their relevance to academic specialization of students, ensuring a tailored approach to meeting their needs. Based on the above-mentioned findings of the study, the important recommendation are:

- The same research has to be carried on other levels of the Faculty of Dentistry.
- Similar research has to be carried out on other Faculties of Medicine in the University of Aden and other Yemeni universities in order to generalize the study findings.
- The university administration, curriculum designers have to take in consideration the use of code-switching by instructors and students while designing or evaluating the courses.
- The University of Aden has to offer extra short courses on medical English for the students who apply for medical faculties so they will not need to use code-switching in their classes.
- Efforts should be made to gradually reduce the use of code-switching in advanced courses and higher levels to promote fluency in English for academic purposes among students.

### Conclusion:

This study focuses on the use and functions of code-switching by the instructors and students during ESP classes, level one, Faculty of Dentistry, University of Aden. Two instruments: a questionnaire and an interview are used for collecting the data and the results show that both the instructors and students use their mother tongue when they need to clarify ideas, elaborate or explain the medical concepts. In sum, code-switching is used in and outside the classroom.

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## أنواع ووظائف التناوب اللغوي لأساتذة وطلاب المستوى الأول في كلية طب الأسنان - جامعة عدن

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**الملخص:** هدف البحث الى معرفة أنواع ووظائف التناوب اللغوي، الذي يستخدمه المحاضرون، في فصول الإنجليزية الطبية في المستوى الأول، من كلية طب وجراحة الأسنان جامعة عدن. تم تحقيق هدف الدراسة من خلال تحليل محتوى البيانات التي تم جمعها من خلال اعتماد أسلوب كمي للاستبيان لاستخلاص آراء ستة محاضرين ، بالإضافة إلى اعتماد أسلوب نوعي لمقابلات تم إجراؤها مع ثلاثة محاضرين، تم اختيارهم من بين ستة محاضرين فاعليين. وبناءً على تحليل البيانات، كشفت الدراسة عن أن هناك وظائف عدة يتم تحقيقها باستخدام التناوب اللغوي كانت أهمها: شرح الأفكار، والتأكيد على الفكرة المهمة قيد النقاش، وإعطاء الطلبة النصيحة والتحذير والتنبيه والتوجيه اثناء التطبيق العلمي في المختبرات، وتوضيح الكلام المبهم، وتوفير الوقت، ومناقشة المعلومات التي يمكن أن تكون أكثر شياً بذلك الموجودة في اللغة العربية، وجعل الموضوعات الصعبة أكثر إثارة، وتحسين مشاركة الطلاب، ولفت انتباه الطلاب، وسد الفجوة الاجتماعية بين الطالب و المحاضر، وسد فترات التوقف في الكلام الناتجة عن نسيان بعض المفردات. كل تلك الوظائف للتناوب اللغوي كانت في المقام الأول استراتيجيات لتلبية احتياجات الطلبة في التواصل؛ لغرض تسهيل فهم المقررات الطبية. توصي هذه الدراسة مصممي المناهج في كليات الطب وطب الأسنان بصياغة سياسات واضحة لاستخدام التناوب اللغوي بطريقة تفيد الطلبة ولا تنتهك أو تعوق لغة التدريس.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التناوب اللغوي، المقررات الطبية، كلية طب الاسنان.