



REVIEW

Teacher's Code-switching to L1 in Chinese College EFL Class

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ABSTRACT

The paper tries to explore teachers' code-switching to Chinese in EFL classroom. Quantitative and qualitative research methods are adopted in the study. The case study centers on showing the attitude of teachers and that of students towards the CS to L1. It indicated that both teachers and students had positive attitude toward CS to Chinese in EFL classroom. The results in the classroom recording showed that students' English proficiency level influenced the frequency of teachers' CS; teachers alternate to Chinese mainly to facilitate students' understanding or to emphasize some key points.

1. Teacher's Code-switching to L1 in Chinese College EFL Class

Code-switching (henceforth CS) is defined as one of the inevitable consequences in communication among different varieties. It is the result of language contact in different multilingual and multicultural communities^[3]. Since 1980s, the studies have centered on analyzing the grammar and the use of target language and the first language, especially on calculating the total number of native language produced by teachers or the different functions of the native language in teacher's talk^[16]. Most research involves CS of various types in bilingual or multilingual classroom settings. The study in foreign language classroom is relatively limited. The present paper intends to analyze two English teachers' CS to L1 in college English classroom settings. There is a heated discus-

sion among different views regarding whether it is helpful or not to switch back and forth between TL and NL in the EFL language learning classroom. The proponents of target language exclusivity demonstrate that it is greatly important for the teachers to have learners exposed in many different language functions in the TL^[4]. On the contrary, some researchers believe that it is a humanistic approach to have the students use their mother language because it may allow them to say what they want to say^[3].

Faced with conflicting opinions, the paper tries to investigate the teachers' CS pattern in different classroom settings: one is with high proficient student and the other is with low proficient students. It predicts that (1) teachers' amount of CS to L1 is reduced while interacting with non-English majors; (2) teachers' patterns of CS to L1 is different in interacting with English majors and non-English majors. The following research questions guided the

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study: (1) what are the teacher's attitudes and the students' attitude towards teachers' CS to the L1? (2) What are the differences in the amounts and patterns of teachers' CS to L1 in interacting with English majors and non-English majors?

2. Literature Review

According to Wardhaugh^[18], the term code refers to any kind of system that people use in the process of communication. People may switch from one code to another code when it is needed^[17]. There have been many studies on code-switching. Cook^[3] proposed the idea that code-switching is shifting from one language to another in mid-speech when two or many speakers share the same languages. Li^[9] defined code-switching as "a cover term to describe a range of linguistic behavior that involves the use of more than one language or language variety in the same interaction". Poplack^[15] divided code-switching into three different types in her study, namely tag, inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching. Tag-switching is to insert a tag phrase from one language into an utterance from another language. Inter-sentential switching arises at a clause or sentence boundary. Intra-sentential switching occurs within every clause or sentence, which is considered as the most complex form of switching. He concluded that code-switching, rather than representing debasement of linguistic skills is actually a sensitive indicator of bilingual ability. In this paper, "code" is used to refer to two distinct languages, Chinese and English. In China, most of the English teachers are bilingual, with Mandarin their L1, and English the foreign language. They are called non-native bilingual teachers^[14]. Code-switching refers to the process that EFL teachers switch back and forth between Chinese and English. The paper will follow Poplack's^[15] classification of CS.

A large number of classroom CS studies center around functions and motivations for juxtapositions of two languages.

In Kraemer's^[7] study, five teaching assistants' (TA) code-switching patterns were analyzed. He tries to explore whether native and nonnative German teacher assistants (TAs) use English in beginning German language classrooms. Moreover, the study investigates the extent and various functions of CS in teacher assistants' utterance. Questionnaires, classroom recording and interview were adopted in the study. Results of the study showed that previous language teaching experience as well as a background in relevant teacher training coursework reduced the amount of English used. However, in this study, the results cannot be generalized in that many variables such as TA' language experience, students' development of pro-

ficiency or the class content are not controlled.

Liu^[11] conducted a case study which unveiled the teachers' and the students' attitudes towards code-switching to Chinese in Chinese university EFL classroom. By analyzing the results from teachers and students' questionnaires and classroom recordings, she found that 85% of the teachers stated that students' English proficiency is the main factor which makes them shift from English to Chinese. A general situation of CS is also investigated, although eight English classes (50 minutes for each class) for English majors and non-English majors were recorded, no difference was not made. Data collection is restricted and many variables are not controlled, such as students' education level, learning style etc., which may influence teachers' CS to L1. Cheng^[2] investigated the beliefs and attitudes that Chinese college English teachers hold towards code-switching. A semi-structured questionnaire was adopted. The study suggested that students' ability is regarded as the most significant factor affecting teachers' code-switching, and the first language (L1) is mainly used to teach grammar and abstract words. The limitation of the study is that it did not include the teachers' actual code-switching practices in class. Motivated by the previous findings, the present paper intends to compare the amount and patterns of teachers' CS to L1 between English majors and non-English majors.

3. Research Design

3.1 Participants

The participants include two English teachers and 63 students (28 English majors and 35 non-English majors) in Shandong University of Technology. Personal information of the teachers is given in Table 1. Before the experiment, personal information is obtained by interviews. Basic description of the teacher participants is as followed:

Table 1. Basic description of teacher participants

	Teacher A	Teacher B
Gender	M	F
Education level	M.A.	M.A.
Academic ranks	lecture	associate Prof.
Teaching experience (year)	15	20
Overseas experience (year)	2	2
Self-reported English proficiency	High	High
Relevant courses	Chinese and Western Cultures;	Intercultural communication;
	A Course of Comparative Study;	Translation Study and Theories;

	English Practical Writing;	English Public Speaking;
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Table 2. Brief description of student participants

	High proficient	Low proficient
Gender	3M/25F	16M/19F
Age	21	21
Potential ability	4.82 (.863)	4.37 (.808)
Current ability	18.29 (3.230)	16.63 (2.438)
CEE English score	133.25 (5.060)	119.91 (10.612)

There are 28 high proficient participants from English majors and 35 low proficient participants from non-English majors (majoring in computer science, business, laws, chemistry). All student participants completed the online Language History Questionnaire (LHQ)^[9]. The questions involved since when, under which circumstances and how intensively the participants used English, how good they feel they are at learning new language, which is termed as ‘potential ability’, on a 7-point scale (1: Very poor; 2: Poor 3: Limited 4: Average 5: Good 6: Very good 7: Native-like), how they self-rated their current ability in different language domains (reading, speaking, listening, etc.), which is termed as ‘current ability,’ on a 7-point scale (1: Very poor; 2: Poor 3: Limited 4: Average 5: Good 6: Very good 7: Native-like). Independent sample *t* tests indicated that the two groups differed significantly in self-rated ability in learning new languages and self-rated current ability in language learning, $t = 2.132$, $df = 61$, $p = 0.037$; $t = 2.321$, $df = 61$, $p = 0.024$.

The different kinds of language tests were reported in the LHQ, including CEE for English (College Entrance Exam), known as *Gaokao*, CET-4 and CET-6 (College English Test) for non-English major, TEM-4 for English majors. Among the tests, CEE is the only test that all the student participants took. Therefore, it is regarded as a benchmark to measure students’ proficiency level. CEE is the most important and most influential exam in China^[1,11]. Bai^[1] concluded that CEE subject score such as foreign language (English) is a significant predictor of undergraduate academic performance. The measurement, therefore, is of greatest predictive power of proficiency. Comparing the two groups of participants’ CEE English scores, Independent Sample *t* tests indicated that there is a significant difference between high proficient participants and low proficient participants ($t = 6.561$, $df = 50.895$, $p = 0.000$).

3.2 Methodology

In order to have a genuine reflection of teachers’ code-switching in classroom, two teacher participants’

talks are recorded. The interviews are used in Chinese to get a better understanding of their talk in the classroom.

3.3 Questionnaire

Two questionnaires are used for collecting quantitative data on people’s opinion on code-switching to L1, one for teachers (Appendix A), the other for students (Appendix B), respectively. The questionnaires are made with some revisions based on the study of Macaro^[12], Levine^[8] and Liu^[11]. The questions are concerned with the attitudes, the frequency, the consciousness, the patterns, the functions of code-switching to Chinese in the EFL classroom.

3.4 Classroom Recordings

All the classroom recordings will be collected in Shandong University of Technology where the author is teaching. Two teacher participants’ classes (30 minutes for one class) for high proficient students and low-proficient students are recorded by using voice recorders. A voice recorder is put in the front of the classroom and then the researcher leaved the classroom, where the teachers and the students may feel relaxed.

Classroom recordings are used for collecting the data concerning the frequency and the patterns of teachers’ code-switching to L1. Some of the materials recorded are then transcribed into written forms which can be used as supporting materials from the questionnaires. Every switch from English to Chinese will be noted. In the present study, the analysis of code-switching is only applicable for teachers’ utterance.

3.5 Interview

After the classroom recording, the researcher conducted interviews with each teacher lasting about 15-20 minutes. The researcher asked the teacher about the reasons why he or she switched to Chinese in certain instances and took them down on the notebook. The interviews will be conducted in Chinese.

3.6 Procedure

Each teacher participant will teach two groups of students respectively, namely, English majors and non-English majors. Before the class, the teachers will be informed that both English and Chinese are allowed in classroom interaction and their lessons will be recorded for the purpose of classroom discourse study. Topic is selected randomly from the textbook they are using in the semester. The specific purpose of the recording was not told to the teachers. Before the experiment began, the experimenter explains the requirement in Chinese to the student participants.

They are informed to act as naturally as possible and more active participation is preferred during discussion. The study is only concerned about the teacher's talk. The classes will be recorded in the normal classroom. After the first class being recorded, the teacher will take a 15-minute break and continue to the second class in which a different group of students are involved. The second teacher participant followed the same procedure on the same day.

After the classes finish, the teacher participants were interviewed online. Questions concerning the reasons why he adopted CS to L1 in certain instances were proposed. The author took down every reason for the occurrence of CS to Chinese (Appendix C). As a result, the frequency and the functions of each instance of CS are summarized in the study.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 The Results and Discussion of the Questionnaires

Table 3. Attitude to the use of Chinese

	Teachers' response		Students' response	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	3.33	0	0
Disagree	0	0	5	16.67
Neither agree or disagree	6	20.00	9	30.00
Agree	22	73.33	15	50.00
Strongly agree	1	3.33	1	3.33

According to Table 3, we can see a high percentage of teachers (73.33%) agree on the use of Chinese in EFL class while a relatively low percentage (50%) of students agree with it. It implies code-switching is commonplace in the EFL class. 20% of the teachers and 30% of the students hold neutral attitude towards on the Chinese code. It is important to note that no teacher disagrees with use of Chinese code and only a small portion of students (16.67%) disagree with it. It is incongruous with Liu's^[11] study, in which a small percent (8.3) of teachers do not agree with the use of Chinese code. To conclude, we can see most teachers and students hold a positive attitude toward CS to Chinese.

Table 4. Attitudes toward CS to Chinese as an efficient strategy

	Teachers' response		Students' response	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0

Disagree	3	10.00	12	40.00
Neither agree or disagree	3	10.00	2	6.67
Agree	20	66.67	16	53.33
Strongly agree	4	13.33	0	0

Table 4 indicates that 66.67% of the teachers and 53.33% of the students agree that alternating to Chinese is an efficient way of teaching English in EFL class. Compared to teachers' response (13.33%), no student strongly agree that Chinese as an efficient strategy in EFL class. It may imply that some students prefer more English input in EFL class. It is testified by the fact that 40% of the students' negative response on the Chinese use as an efficient strategy.

Table 5. Responses on the frequency of CS to Chinese

	Teachers' response		Students' response	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Always	1	3.33	2	6.67
Sometimes	21	70.00	12	40.00
Occasionally	8	26.67	16	53.33
Never	0	0	0	0

According to Table 5, a different pattern of frequency of CS was found in EFL class. Compared to students' response (40%), a larger proportion of teachers (70%) admitted that they sometimes switch to Chinese. It showed that teachers and students hold different views on the frequency of CS to Chinese. However, both teachers and student believe the occurrence of CS to Chinese in EFL class.

Table 6. Responses on the consciousness of CS to Chinese

	Teachers' response		Students' response	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Always	15	50.00	10	33.33
Sometimes	14	46.67	13	43.33
Occasionally	1	3.33	7	23.33
Never	0	0	0	0

From the table, we can conclude that most teachers can be conscious of the use of Chinese code in the EFL class. It is in accordance with the Table 9, in which all the teachers switch to Chinese in order to facilitate the students' understanding when difficulty arises. Similarly, most students can notice teachers' switching to Chinese, indicating that they know the situations well where the teachers make the switches.

Table 7. Teachers' response on the dominant pattern of CS to Chinese

	Number	Percentage
Inter-sentential CS	7	23.33
Intra-sentential CS	16	53.33
Tag-switching	7	23.33
Total	30	99.99

As is shown in Table 7, the dominant pattern used by the majority of the teachers in EFL class is intra-sentential code-switching (53.33%). It is in accordance with Table 10, in which the frequency of intra-sentential CS is higher than that of inter-sentential CS. The pattern of inter-sentential CS to L1 and that of tag-switching is the same, 23.33%. However, it is in conflict with Table 10, in which tag-switching did not happen in teachers' recording.

Table 8. Teachers' response on the factors which may influence CS to Chinese

	Number	Percentage
Students' English proficiency level	30	100
Teachers' English proficiency level	22	73.33
Distance between E and C	10	33.33
Department policy on target language use	3	10.00
Pedagogical materials	21	70.00
Lesson content and objectives	16	53.33
Others	3	10.00

The result shows that "students' English proficiency" is the most important factor which might influence CS to Chinese in EFL class. As is indicated in the table, 100% of the teachers claim the "students' English proficiency" is the most important factor which makes them switch from English to Chinese. It is consistent with Cheng's study^[2], which claims that 94% teachers treat the students' language ability as the most significant factor influencing on the choice of language in class. The majority of the teachers believe "teachers' English proficiency" and "pedagogical materials" as the second important factors, accounting for 73.33% and 70%. It may suggest that teachers' CS to Chinese implies low language proficiency. In addition, "the distance between the linguistic systems of Chinese and English" (33.33%) and "lesson contents and objectives" (53.33%) also lead teachers' CS to Chinese at classes. Finally, "department policy on target language use" and other factors may influence teachers' code-switching to Chinese in EFL class.

Table 9. Teachers' response on the functions of CS to Chinese in the EFL class

	Number	Percentage
Explain grammar	22	73.33
Manage class	9	30.00
Index solidarity	9	30.00
Translate unknown items	20	66.67
Facilitate understanding	50	100.00
Others	0	0

The table showed that all the teachers' code-switch to Chinese in order to facilitate students' understanding. Most teachers (73.33%) alternate to Chinese for grammar explanation. It is in agreement with the finding in Table 8, which showed that lesson content and objective may be one of the factors influencing CS to Chinese.

4.1.1 The Results and Analysis of the Classroom Recordings

Data from the two English teachers' classroom recording showed that no "English-only" language class in practice. It is in accordance with Table 5. Both teachers more or less use Chinese in their classes.

4.1.2 Frequency Analysis of the Patterns of Code-Switching to Chinese

As mentioned earlier, Poplack's^[15] division of code-switching is adopted in the analysis of patterns of CS to L1. The calculation of the frequency of the three patterns is based on one class (30 minutes) of each subject teacher. Table 10 presents the frequency of each teachers' code-switching to L1. The letter 'L' represents the class in which the teacher interacts with non-English majors. The number 'H' represents the class in which the teacher interacts with English majors.

Table 10. Frequency of CS to Chinese

	A		B	
	L	H	L	H
Inter-sentential CS	23	9	26	4
Intra-sentential CS	31	24	26	8
Tag switching	0	0	0	0
Total	54	33	52	12

It is shown that tag-switching never occur in the classes. The instances of intra-sentential CS to Chinese occur most frequently among the three patterns (89 vs. 62 vs. 0). For teacher A, it is obvious that the instances of intra-sen-

tential CS to Chinese occur more frequently than those of inter-sentential CS to Chinese (55 vs. 32). For teacher B, the instances of intra-sentential CS to Chinese occur as frequently as that of 2 inter-sentential CS to Chinese (34 vs. 30). In order to facilitate students' understanding, Teacher B switches to Chinese frequently by translating some sentences into Chinese while interacting with non-English major. It is natural that inter-sentential pattern happens with a great frequency.

The result is not in accordance with that in Table 7. In Table 7, the occurrence of the three patterns is 53.33% vs. 23.33% vs. 23.33%. The present data is collected when the two subject teachers are discussing cultural values with some college students. The lesson objective is to improve students' intercultural communication competence. It is different from the lesson which is mainly with the purpose of instructing vocabulary and grammar.

The result is in agreement with that in Table 8. Teacher A and Teacher B switch to Chinese more frequently while interacting with non-English majors than interacting with English majors (54 vs. 33; 52 vs. 12). During interview, teacher A acknowledged that the English majors are passive at classes. It might be the factor leading him to switches to Chinese more often. We may conclude that students' personality might attribute to the teachers' CS to Chinese at class. While for teacher B, she admitted that she switched to Chinese less often while interacting English majors. She realized that the students can understand what she said at classes. They gave positive responses from time to time, resulting in the less frequent occurrence of CS to Chinese, only 11 times. The students' English proficiency level may influence teachers' CS to Chinese. The result is congruent with that in Table 8.

Table 11. Frequency of the Functions of Code-Switching to Chinese

	Number	Percentage
Emphasize some points	39	24.38
Facilitate understanding	92	57.50
Translating unknown items	13	8
Index a solidarity	5	3.13
Manage the class	8	5.00
Explain grammar	0	0.00
Others	3	1.88
Total	160	100

Table 11 shows the frequency of functions of CS to Chinese in the classroom recording. It is obvious that teachers switch to Chinese most frequently (57.50%) to facilitate students' understanding because they thought the

students have some difficulties in understanding what they said. They frequently provided L1 to enhance their comprehension. In order to emphasize some points (24.38%), the teachers switch to Chinese to let the students pay special attention to some key terms about cultural values. The teacher has a clear understanding of the lesson object, so they will not switch to CS to explain grammar during interaction. The other forms of functions occur to a varying degree. Next, the author will describe the samples in more details. The data showed the teacher can switch to Chinese to stress some important points.

4.1.3 Examples

Example 1

Teacher A: Collectivism, doing things together. Does 集体主义 mean selflessness? Do you agree? (intra-sentential CS to L1: to emphasize some points; ; "collectivism")

Example 2

Teacher B: Values, 文化价值, 那么我们今天要讨论的呢, 就是价值观。We talk about fundamental values, you know, fundamental, most basic, yeah. (intra-sentential CS to L1: to emphasize some points; "values, cultural values. So, what we are going to discuss today is 'cultural values'.")

Here, teacher A alternated to Chinese to stress the key word 集体主义 "collectivism" concerning cultural values. Teacher B used Chinese to stress the topic she is going to discuss with the students. Therefore, the students may have a clear picture about the topic at the beginning of the class.

To facilitate understanding

Example 3

Teacher A: Sixty years ago, we got the chance to win the Nobel Prize of Medicine 人工牛黄结晶, 牛胰岛素。Also 3 years ago we really won the prize by Tu Youyou..... (intra-sentential CS to L1: to facilitate students' understanding; "artificial bezoar")

Example 4

Teacher B: So, this American culture sometimes is defined as I culture. Because individuals are emphasized. In this way, they believe in self-reliance, that means, you have to work for your own future. You have to work for yourself. You have to set on your own feet. Yeah, on your own feet. So, how about these words you know like popular in Chinese, 富二代, 官二代? (intra-sentential CS to L1: to facilitate students' understanding; "the second generation of the rich"; "the officialings")

In Example 3, Teacher A alternated to Chinese 人工牛黄结晶, 牛胰岛素 (*rengong niuhuang jiejing, niuyidao-su*, 'artificial bezoar') to remind the students of a medicine "artificial bezoar". The students might have some difficul-

ty in understanding what artificial bezoar is if Teacher A used English for this technical term. In order to facilitate students' understanding, Teacher A adopted the Chinese equivalence directly. Therefore, the class efficiency was enhanced greatly.

In Example 4, Teacher B is talking *I* culture and *we* culture with the students. She used Chinese directly when she speaks of some words with Chinese cultural characteristics. 富二代 (*fu'er dai*, 'the second generation of the rich') and 官二代 (*guan'er dai*, 'officialings') are popular topics among the younger generations. The students' understanding is not only enhanced but the relationship between the teacher and the students is getting more intimate.

More examples are shown as follows:

Example 5

Teacher A: Collectivism, they try to blur right and privacy. In western countries, they care about privacy. 天王盖地虎, 宝塔镇河妖。[The teacher speaks in a very low voice.] We can barely hear the guest sitting opposite. (This sentence is extracted from a Chinese film *Tracks in the Snow Forest*. It is used as a contact signal between a hero and a bandit;)

Teacher A is talking about the difference between collectivism and individualism. In order to show that in western countries people tend to care about privacy, teacher A role-played a Chinese film, speaking in a low voice. In this way can the students understand what individualism mean in western countries.

4.2 Discussion

First, teachers' attitudes toward CS. The data from the questionnaire of the teachers and the students showed that most teachers hold positive attitude toward CS to Chinese in the EFL class. It accords with the data from the classroom recording. Two teachers used Chinese to facilitate students' understanding in EFL class.

Second, inter-sentential and intra-sentential patterns do occur in the class. However, tag switching never occur during interaction with the students. According to Poplack^[15], code-switching may indicate the bilingual ability. Tag-switching is subject to minimal syntactic restrictions and intra-sentential switching is regarded as the most complicated form of switching. The data from the two teachers' questionnaires showed that they feel they are proficient in spoken English. Therefore, they did not use tag-switching to communicate with the students.

Third, the data from the teachers' questionnaire showed that among the different functions of code-switching to Chinese in EFL class, helping students when they have some trouble in understanding account for 100%. The data

from the classroom recording showed that two teachers alternated to Chinese codes very frequently to facilitate students' understanding (57.50%). Both indicated that code-switching to Chinese may be an efficient strategy for teachers.

5. Conclusion and Limitations

The present study investigates the teachers' and the students' attitude toward CS to Chinese in the EFL class. The study provided a brief description of the frequency and patterns of two teachers' CS to Chinese. It is concluded that most teachers and students take positive attitude toward CS to Chinese. The two teachers alternated to Chinese to one degree or another to facilitate students' understanding or to emphasize some point. However, there are some limitations in the study.

First, besides CEE English score, another objective criteria to differentiate the proficiency level of the English majors and non-English major are needed. Some students may overestimate or underestimate their current language learning ability. The objective criterion and subjective description work together to guarantee the proficiency level of the student participants.

Second, more teachers' English classes should be recorded to provide us with a full picture of their CS to Chinese. The study was so restricted that the different patterns and functions of code-switching to Chinese cannot be included. It is assumed that with more teacher participants, the use of teachers' CS might be found in EFL class.

The study is only a preliminary one in the field of code-switching in EFL class of China. Extensive work needs to be done for more researchers in the future.

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