An Investigation into Iranian EFL Teachers’ Attitudes toward Code Switching

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Abstract
English is taught as a foreign language in Iranian educational centers such as schools and universities. Code switching is usually considered with the suspicion in classes which English is taught as a foreign language. The present study was done to investigate the Iranian EFL teachers’ attitudes toward code switching because Iranian teachers sometimes enjoy code switching when delivering their ideas in foreign language classrooms. For this purpose, a questionnaire was adopted from Yao (2011) to gather data on the topic. The percentage of the data gathered through the questionnaire was calculated by the researcher. The finding of the present study showed that most of the Iranian teachers had a positive look toward code switching while some others had different ideas. The finding also showed that code switching can act as a bridge to transfer some challenging points from the target language to the native language of Iranian learners in EFL classrooms. Further, it can be claimed that code switching sometimes is a unique way to transfer the knowledge and also EFL points from an EFL teachers to EFL learners based on the data gathered in the present study and it can be enjoyed by EFL Iranian teachers.

Keywords: Code Switching, Attitude, EFL Teachers

1. Introduction
Code switching is considered as a phenomenon which is enjoyed frequently in EFL classes in Iran. Researchers and teachers in English as a foreign or second language classes have been observed to be enjoying code switching in classes less than usual (Yao, 2011). It is stated that code-switching is a difficult, skilled linguistic methodology enjoyed by bilingual speakers to communicate necessary social understanding above and beyond the referential material of an utterance. This happens to comply with the interlocutor or to be different from him meaning that code switching is an outcome of language adaptation in different conditions (Durano, 2009). The current study was designed to investigate the Iranian EFL teachers’ attitudes toward code switching. It is stated that code switching is one of the unavoidable outcomes of communication among different language diversities which has long existed as an outcome of language contact observed vastly especially in multicultural and multilingual communities (Jingxia, 2010). Sometimes there is a point which has no equivalent in the target language and the teachers have no way to enjoy target language to transfer the points; therefore, the best way can be code switching. Research studies have been done by different researchers related to code switching such as functions of code switching in school children’s conversation by Reyes (2004), teachers’ code switching to the L1 in EFL classrooms by Jingxia (2010), and Russian-Estonian code switching in the university by Zbrodskaja (2007). The above studies concluded that code switching is a common phenomenon in EFL classes; for example, Jingxia (2010, p.21) concluded that code-switching to Chinese is a common phenomenon in EFL classrooms in Chinese universities and that it plays a significant role in English learning and teaching process.

2. Review of the Literature
2.1. Definitions of code switching
To define code switching, it is important to understand what code means. It was explained that code is found as a neutral umbrella word for different languages, dialects and also styles/registers and so on. Code switching is a communicative methodology happening among people in situations like bilingual contexts where the
participants are able to enjoy two languages well. Thus, they select a code which transfers their goals in a suitable manner (Almauerová, 2013). Code switching is defined as “pragmatic pole of the continuum to be discussed” (Auer, 1998, p.2). Chaiwichian (2007, p.7) stated that code switching is “the alternating use of the two or more codes in the same conversational situation.”

### 2.2. Types of code switching in EFL classes

Three types of code switching i.e. intra-sentential, inter-sentential code switching and tag-switching are common in EFL classes.

#### 2.2.1. Intra-Sentential Code Switching

This type of code switching occurs within a sentence. It is stated that it needs a lot of integrations and therefore it is just enjoyed by most of the fluent speakers who are bilingual. It is believed that the boundary between tag-switching and intra-sentential code switching is not clear because it was explained that tag-switching is normally loaded in a heavy manner in ethnic subject (Yletyinen, 2004). It was also said that intrasentential code switching involves switching at the level of a sentence or structure, constituent or perhaps word. It is claimed to be more frequent than other types of code switching, and practiced by less proficient bilinguals for different reasons (Dhaouadi, 2006). Intrasentential switching is also considered as emblematic as based on some expressions or statements for example interjections such as ‘yes, no, I see, you know’. It relates most commonly to content words and nouns that have a clear connection to contents. This kind also rarely matters to syntactic constraints, and can appear without violating syntactic matters. It was claimed that according to different studies of code switching in different language schools, intrasentential code switching happens more often than intersentential code switching relating most commonly to single words and more especially content words and nouns that have clear connection to cultural contents. Whether the switching is intrasentential code switching or intersentential, code switching experts discuss that code switching is not a random or deviant idiosyncratic manner, rather it can be called as ‘grammatically constrained’ (Dhaouadi, 2006).

#### 2.2.2. Tag-switching

“Tag switching is inserting a tag in a language to an utterance that is otherwise in another language” (Yletyinen, 2004, p. 47). In EFL classes in Iran sometimes the teacher or learners insert a Persian tag to the utterance or vice versa which can be defined as tag switching. It can be said that this type of code switching is used by the learners most of the time. This switching includes exclamation, fillers, tags and expressions called idioms. Tag switching are separated lexical items or phrases which are not related syntactically to the other utterances. The occurrence of a tag does not break any grammatical rule either. Some examples to clarify the role of the tag switching can be similar ‘you know’ and ‘I mean’ in sentences and structures which are completely in the other language. It is believed that tags are topics to minimal syntactic banned rules therefore putting into an utterance which is monolingual and do not violate syntactic rules (Shogren, 2011). This type of code switching rarely happens in EFL classes and the border between this type of code switching and intra-sentential code switching is not clear and it is not obvious to detect the type of code switching.

**Research Questions**

1. What are Iranian EFL teachers’ attitudes toward code switching?
2. What are differences and similarities among Iranian teachers’ attitudes toward code switching?

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

The research was done to investigate the Iranian EFL teachers’ attitudes toward code switching therefore it asked sixty Iranian EFL teachers’ to state their ideas through the questionnaire. The above mentioned questionnaire was distributed among the participated teachers and the teachers stated their attitudes toward code switching according to the items of the questionnaire.

#### 3.2. Participants

Sixty teachers who teach English as a foreign language were selected randomly as a sample of Iranian EFL teachers. The teachers were both male and female. They had different English degrees such as English Teaching, Literature, Translation, and General Linguistics. They teach English in schools and universities in Mazandaran, north of Iran. All of the teachers’ native language was Persian and English was their foreign language.

#### 3.3. Instrumentation

The researchers enjoyed a questionnaire to do the study. The questionnaire was adopted from Yao (2011). The above mentioned questionnaire had four parts and five items for each part. The questionnaire was arranged based on the Likert scale. It was arranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Before doing the research the questionnaire was submitted to a sample teacher and after two weeks it was submitted again and the reliability of the questionnaire was considered (α=.79).
3.4. Procedure
Sixty EFL Iranian teachers were requested to participate in this study. A questionnaire adopted from Yao (2011) related to the topic and, 60 EFL teachers randomly selected in Mazandaran stated their attitudes carefully. They stated their attitudes by their own ideas and there was not any obligation to state their attitudes.

3.5. Data Analysis
The researcher of this study gathered the data through the above mentioned questionnaire. He then examined all the collected information to consider whether they are enough for analysis. Then the gathered data were studied and the percentage of each part and item of the questionnaire was calculated by the researcher. Descriptive statistics was enjoyed in order to calculate the percentage of the items.

4. Results and Discussions
The questions of the present study dealt with the Iranian EFL teachers’ attitudes toward code switching. The results revealed that the teachers’ attitudes who participated in the present study toward code switching were variable. Some had a positive look while others had a negative look toward code switching. Although they have various attitudes toward code switching, they had some similarities in some aspects such as clarifying the points, engaging the learners with the class etc. The gathered attitudes can be as a reasonable source of enjoying code switching in EFL classes by the Iranian EFL teachers. After distribution of the questionnaire among teachers, the results were collected and the related tables were presented by the researcher as follows:

### Distribution of the Code Switching Attitudes toward Items in percentage in the Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>not sure</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>strongly agree</th>
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4.1. Teachers’ Attitudes toward Classroom Code Switching
Teachers’ responses to items on attitudes toward code switching were analyzed under four subheadings as follows: Questions 1 to 5 are on attitudes to teachers’ persona in using code switching in EFL classes, questions 6 to 10 are on the attitudes toward code switching in subject access, questions 11 to 15 are on the attitudes toward code switching in classroom management and questions 16 to 20 are on the attitudes toward code switching for interpersonal relations.

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4.2. Attitudes to Code-switching in Relation to Teachers’ Persona

The first question of the questionnaire considers the teachers’ attitudes to the language proficiency of teachers who switch code in EFL classes. Table one in this study shows that about 65 percent of the EFL classes agree or strongly agree that teachers can express their ideas and opinions clearly. 21.66 percent of the teachers disagree or strongly disagree with this item and 13.33 percent of the teachers are not sure on this item. The second question of this study deals with teachers’ attitudes toward EFL teachers’ switching the code can cause some difficulty or hardship what an instructor speaks. As the table shows that about 15 percent of the participants in this study strongly agree or agree and about 55 percent disagree or strongly disagree with this item and 30 percent are not sure. Question number three elicits the attitudes from teachers on this point that teachers’ code switching will pollute the language. It is found that 4.66 percent of the teachers who participate in this study strongly agree while 16.66 percent agree, 13.33 percent strongly disagree and 41.66 percent disagree. To answer this item, 30 percent of the teachers are not sure on the item. The fourth item is used to concern Iranian EFL teachers’ attitudes toward the essence of the link between switches and bilinguals’ proficiency in languages. To answer this item, 8.33 percent of participants strongly agree. 13.33 agree with this item. 36.66 percent of the teachers who state their attitudes toward code switching disagree or strongly disagree. About 41.66 percent of the teachers have no idea and ticked ‘not sure’ choice for their idea. About 8 percent of the participants strongly agree with item 5, 25 percent of the teachers agree and also 25 percent of the teachers disagree. The percent for strongly disagree toward item 5 is 8.33 and 33.33 percent are not sure and have no idea.

4.3. Attitudes toward Code switching in Relation to Subject Access

Sometimes teacher’s code switching helps the learners and students to understand the subject matter and the material. The second part of the questionnaire is dealt with some items on the teachers’ attitudes whether code switching will help students understand the subject matter of their lessons’ topic or not. This part of the questionnaire consisted of 5 questions like other parts of the questionnaire. 8.33 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed on the question, 18.33 percent of the participants in this study disagreed and about 48.33 percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed on this item. About 25 percent of Iranian teachers had no idea on this item. To teach grammatical points and topics is always a challenging subject to consider in EFL classes. One of the strategies to teach grammatical points can be code switching. The data showed that 16.66 percent of the teachers who took part in this study strongly agreed on the item. The percentage of teachers who agreed on this item was 31.66. To consider the percentage of teachers who strongly disagreed and disagreed on the item, it can be said that it was 8.33, and 25 and 23.33 percent of the teachers had no idea on the item. This result proves our hypothesis that, when teaching grammatical ideas and lexical items, teachers often choose students’ native language. As an EFL teacher in Iran uses students’ native language to teach grammatical and lexical items and points, the understanding of the points would be easier and also simpler. Knowing the culture and background of the text can play an important and key role in understanding the text because a student should be familiar with cultural points of text to have a reasonable relationship to text. It is supposed that when facing the cultural tips in the text of a material and course, Iranian teachers who teach English as a foreign language in classes prefer to use L1 i.e. Persian to demonstrate them better. The views and opinions to the item 8 prove this assumption. The teachers expressed their attitudes toward this item as follows: 6.66 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed, 15 percent of the teachers disagreed, 23.33 percent of them strongly agreed and 38.33 percent of the teachers agreed. Some teachers had no idea and the percentage of this alternative was 16.66. It is always a challenging subject to consider that how we can elicit the responses from the students for teachers. Sometimes EFL teachers in Iran use students and pupils’ first language i.e. Persian for both eliciting answers to the teachers’ questions and also attracting their attention. Item 9 deals with this point to consider that whether code switching can help the teachers to elicit responses from the students. About 5 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed and 21.66 percent disagreed on this topic. Some teachers believed that code switching could be a safe way to have students’ answers therefore 16.66 percent of the teachers strongly agreed and 38.33 percent of the teachers agreed. About 16.66 percent students had no special idea on this item. When it came to question 10 about whether instructor, using code-switching, would better clarify the lesson content they taught, 58.33 percent of the sample agreed or strongly agreed with this opinion on the item 10, whereas 26.66 percent disagreed, and 6.66 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed and 8.33 were uncertain.

4.4. Attitudes to Code Switching in Relation to Classroom Management

Some teachers switch to the mother tongue after having tried vain attempts to manage the class in the target language. To manage a class is very important in order to teach well and it can help the students learn the course of study better. To ask students to pay attention to the material and points is sometimes a challenging issue to consider for teachers who teach English as a foreign language; therefore in some cases like, to discipline students and pupils, to gain and focus learners’ attention, a teacher may use code switching. Item 11 to 15 regarded the role of code switching in classroom management. In reply to item 11; the EFL teachers have different attitudes. 10 percent of the responders strongly disagreed and 13.33 percent of the teachers disagreed on the item. Some teachers believed in this item and stated that they strongly agreed and the percentage of this item was 25. 13.33 percent of the teachers ticked agreed and others were not sure about this item. In response to item 12 i.e. “Teachers who switch codes from English to Persian can better discipline the students” liked to agree and also strongly agree on this item and 25 and 16.66 percent of the teachers ticked
the item respectively. The percent of the teachers disagreed was 33.33 percent of the teachers who strongly disagreed was 11.66 percent. About 14 percent of the teachers had no special idea and they were not sure about this item. Some experts who deal with pedagogic issues and also teaching materials believe that code switching cannot be a way to engage the students’ attention in EFL class. Therefore, in response to item 13, 11.66 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed and 16.66 percent of the teachers disagreed on the item. Some others rejected this idea and believed that code switching could be a way to engage students’ attention, therefore the percentage of the teachers who strongly agreed was 13.33 percent and 45 percent of the teachers agreed on this item. About 13.33 percent of the students were not sure on item 13. In response to the fourteenth item, the teachers state that the teachers who disagreed had the percentage of 25 whereas 8.33 percent strongly disagreed and 18.33 percent of the teacher strongly agreed and 25 percent agreed and 23.33 were uncertain. It seems that code-switching for requesting the students to be quiet is not agreed by many of the teachers. However, some teachers said that they often used Persian to ask students to be quiet. Item 15 dealt with the role of code switching in directing the students in EFL classes and the teachers stated their attitudes toward this item. Therefore, 13.33 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed whereas 25 percent of the teachers disagreed. 16.66 percent of the teachers strongly agreed and 25 percent of the teachers agreed on this item. The percentage of the people who were not sure on the item was 20.

4.5. Attitudes to Code Switching in Relation to Interpersonal Relations

It cannot be said that classroom is a formal place for learning and learners just learn and studies the educational material. It is believed that classrooms can be a social and affective environment for students. In this environment the teachers and students can have a relationship to each other to exchange their identities. To build rapport with individual students, create greater personal warmth and encourage greater student involvement, a teacher may, therefore, when the occasion is appropriate, switch to the students’ native language Yao (2011). With the idea of sixteenth item, the teachers’ views on this item are variable. The results derived from the questionnaire showed that 11.66 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed. 16.66 percent of the teachers who participated in this study strongly agreed. 30 percent of the teachers agreed whereas 11.66 percent of the teachers disagreed. Some teachers had no idea in considering code switching as a way of encouraging the students and 30 percent of them stated that they had no idea on this item. Unfortunately, some teachers have no feedback to the students’ responses and they don’t know how to praise the students and these teachers rarely use praising expressions and words. Item 17 deals with this case that code switching can be enjoyed by the teachers to praise the students who learn English as a foreign language. The teachers who disagreed and agreed consisted of the 28.33 and 16.66 percent of the questionnaire, respectively. Some teachers strongly disagreed and their percentage was 8.33 and 30 percent of the teachers strongly agreed. The teachers who had no idea on this item had the 16.66 percent of the questionnaire. Responses to item 18 indicated that 36.66 percent agreed and 21.66 strongly agreed compared to 8.33 percent who disagreed and 8.33 strongly disagreed and 25 percent who were not sure. It is expected that teachers would take various kinds of methods to enliven their class, involving shifting codes to tell a joke. Some educational experts believe that a teacher should not switch his code to students’ native language to enliven the atmosphere of the class and tell a joke. In their idea it may be lead to bad habits for the students. It is highly advised and suggested that a teacher should have comments on students’ responses to let the students present their ideas in the class. In reply to item 19 and stating their attitudes toward the role of code switching in response to students’ comment, 33.33 percent of the teachers strongly disagreed and 13.33 percent of the teachers strongly agreed. About 30 percent of the teachers agreed and 21.66 percent of the teachers disagreed. In response to this item, 31.66 percent of the teachers had no especial idea and ticked not sure choice in this questionnaire. To the last item of this questionnaire, responses showed that 58.33 percent agreed or strongly agreed in comparison to 10 percent who disagreed, and 11.66 percent strongly disagreed. 20 percent of the teachers had no idea on the item.

5. Conclusion

It can be concluded that most EFL Iranian teachers have a positive look at code switching and they believe that code switching can be as a safe method to deliver the foreign language i.e. English in Iran. They believe in code switching and stated that in delivering some points which are challenging for the teacher’s code switching can be helpful and useful. One of the positive attitudes is when code switching to native language is practiced to enhance communication or when there is a vital reason for code switching, code switching with Persian occurs subconsciously.

Some of the teachers have negative attitudes toward code switching and they disagree on the code switching. They believed that this method of teaching EFL points in classes can not be useful and helpful for the students. Some EFL teachers believed that code switching can be used to clarify the meaning and also some challenging points for the learners. They also expressed that code switching can be enjoyed for easiness of the expressing the personal view and comments on the topics of the class. On the basis of the research findings, the most important conclusion is that there are positive and negative attitudes towards code switching to native language. One of the positive attitudes is when code switching to native language is practiced to enhance communication or when there is a vital reason for code switching, code switching with native language occurs subconsciously. By contrast, there are negative attitudes when intensive code switching to native language

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occurs without a valid reason or occurs with intent to neglect the addressee's emotions, the context of situation, the topic of conversation, and the formality of conversation. The collected data showed that there are vital reasons and causes for code switching with Iranian teachers such as, improper English equivalents, the easiness of expressing their personal views and ideas and also opinions, shortcuts to teach EFL points, enhancing and improving communication etc. Therefore the attitudes of teachers toward code switching are variable and each of the attitudes has a long story behind it to consider.

5.1. Pedagogical Implications
The implications of the study are relevant to educators, classroom teachers and researchers who deal with code switching and EFL points in their study. The results of this study might be useful for both teachers and for further research. It is most important that teachers should understand and realize that the use of code switching acts as a bridge between native language and English when students begin studying English; However, the teacher should also realize that students' use of code switching should occur less often when they have learned more and gained proficiency in English. Therefore, knowing attitudes of EFL teachers can be helpful and interesting for the researchers and also EFL teachers. The results found that there was an increasing frequency use of code switching from target language to native language in EFL classes. This research and study is the first step and also stage to know Iranian teachers' attitudes toward code switching in EFL classes. This study can be valid and also valuable repeat and other related studies on the topic can also replicated in the future. Iranian teachers employed code switching to achieve particular conversational goals to state their notes toward EFL material. These goals and purposes are variable by the teachers' attitudes because their functions toward code switching in EFL classes are different. The finding of this study also displayed that code switching can be considered like an extra matter of fact not as a strategy or technique to enjoy in EFL classes by the teacher. Throughout this study, the researcher has been pointing out the attitudes of Iranian EFL teachers toward code-switching. More investigation into the phenomena of code-switching can help the researchers to understand why it is a common and unavoidable phenomenon in EFL classes. The results of this study also support the outcomes of the previous studies done by other researchers.
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