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Purposes of Code-Switching in Turkish Preparatory Classes: An Action Research

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Abstract

Classroom interaction is a vital factor for teaching and learning second language. Numerous studies were conducted by researchers to shed a light on different aspects of this concept. Many different features of classroom interaction were dealt with researchers such as feedback, questioning, concept checking. Code-switching during the lesson is one of that features. It has been a widely debated topic for researchers. For this reason, the aim of this action research is to see the L1 amount and purposes in a preparatory class. Results indicated that 4/1 lesson time was spent with L1 and teacher used L1 for different purposes such as increasing motivation, increasing comprehension, humor, and building personal relationships

Keywords: Code-Switching, ELT, L1 Use, Motivation, Comprehension

1. Introduction

1.1 Classroom Interaction

Classroom interaction is the dialog between students and teachers in the classroom (Tsui, 2001). According to the Kumpulainen & Wray (2015), researcher started to begin conducting studies about social interaction of the classroom in 1950s and 60s. They claim that whole class interaction between pupils and teacher was the main focus in the early phases of educational oriented researches into classroom interaction. However, Tsui (2001) says that more recent studies about the classroom interaction have begun to focus on to reveal underlying factors that shape the interaction in the classroom. According to the Tsui, teacher and learner beliefs, teacher and students' cultural background, and language learning's psychological aspects are the common studies that focused on and they provide more extended knowledge about the complexity of the classroom interaction. Cazden (1988) claims that results of classroom interactions studies indicated that there were typical classroom interaction patterns. It was Initiation-Response-Feedback/Evaluation (IRF/E) sequence. Waring (2009) states that in this pattern teacher controls the structure and content of the classroom interaction. According to him, in IRF pattern, teacher initiates the dialog by posing questions, then student responses to this question. Finally teacher gives feedback and it finishes the interaction.

Tsui (2001) points that students are persistent questioners, that is, they ask many questions to learn and explore the world around them. They not only learn to talk but also talk to learn. However, according to the studies, number of questions that they ask decrease markedly when they enter the classroom. For this reason, conducting research about classroom interaction and giving importance to this concept plays a crucial role for teaching and learning second language. According Dagarin (2004) classroom interaction plays an important role in language learning. He points the importance of classroom interaction in the following lines. Classroom interaction;

- is effective for communication in target language
- is beneficial since it give metalanguage for communication in cultures.
- is helpful for engaging target language texts
- is helpful for deeping the understanding of cultural and social norms

There are different aspects that can be discussed in the concept of classroom interaction such as feedback, questioning, concept checking, and code-switching (Farrell, 2009). In this action research, code-switching or in other word L1 use in the classroom was discussed. According to the Sert (2005), code-switching is widely observed fact in multilingual societies and it is alternation between languages. Code-switching is used in teachers' and students' discourse in ELT classrooms. Using code-switching, its necessity, and roles have been widely discussed when we look at the literature. On literature some studies are not favor of using code-switching in the classroom (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989; MacDonald, 1993; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002). They believe that only the target language should be used in the classroom. L1 use effects competence in a bad way. On the other hand some studies supports using code-switching in the classroom in the literature (Harbord, 1992; Macaro, 2005).

1.2 Code Switching

Various researchers suggest different functions for code-switching in the classroom. For conceiving this classroom interaction feature better, it is necessary to focus on them. Sali (2014) states that teachers used L1 for three different purposes. They used L1 "to communicate the content of the lesson (Academic), to regulate classroom interaction for efficient lesson flow (Managerial), and for rapport construction (Social/Cultural)" (p 317). Atkinson (1992) suggests that L1 has necessary roles for lead-ins, eliciting language, giving instructions and checking comprehension. On the other hand Macaro (2000, cited in Macaro, 2005) code-switching may be used for different purposes such as building personal relationship with learners, giving complex instructions, controlling students' behaviors, translating and checking understanding to eliminate time limits, teaching grammar explicitly.

Like it was mentioned previously, code-switching has been a widely debated subject in the literature. For further discussions, looking at the different studies related to this concept would be beneficial. Alshammari (2011) conducted a study to see the aim of L1 use and the attitudes of Saudi teachers and students towards Arabic in the EFL classrooms. Results indicated that nearly all of the Arabic teachers who participated in the study used L1 in their classrooms. Questionnaire results showed that students and teachers had positive attitudes towards code-switching in the classroom. Additionally, results revealed that L1 was used for clarification purposes. Alshammari suggests that code-switching can be useful for language learning and it can increase learners' comprehension. Carson & Kashihara (2012) conducted a study with senior and 2nd year university students in the Japan. They compared students' beliefs about L1 use in the classroom with their TOEIC proficiency scores. Results showed that senior students prefer to count on L1 when it is compared with the advanced students. According to the Carson & Kashihara, if students want to make cognitive addition in a quicker way, they should connect L2 to their L1. Another study to see the Iranian students' attitudes towards using L1 was conducted by Nazary (2008). Participants were students at Tehran University and their mother tongue was Farsi. Results showed interesting facts about L1 use. Participants didn't want to use L1 in the classroom and they strongly rejected to use it for better L2 competence. According to Nazary this results were inconsistent with the other studies.

1.3 Relevant Studies

It is also necessary to review the literature about this topic in Turkish context since the data used in this action research was gained from a Turkish classroom. Kayaoğlu (2012) conducted a study with 44 teachers of English in Turkey. He used questionnaire and semi-structured interview for collecting data. Results indicated that teachers of English in Turkey used L1 for pragmatic and practical purposes. Teachers used code-switching for motivational

factors. They believed that teachers who used Turkish would be more motivational than the one who uses only target language in the classroom. In the interviews some teachers answered that they use L1 because it is helpful for simplify the subjects, supports classroom management and warms up the relationship between the students and teachers. Nearly all of the teachers believed that students can use their first language. However, it may change according to the lesson and their levels. Teacher believed that students' using L1 would be more effective rather than staying silent. On the other hand Kafes' (2011) study shows that Turkish teachers use L1 for different purposes. They mostly used L1 for to ask relevant questions to the course or lesson, to explain unknown items and vocabulary, to tell a joke. In line with the related literature, this present study aimed at investigating the code-switching examples in a preparatory class in an action research type. Present study also aimed to find significant answer for the following research questions.

How much amount of lesson time was reserved for code-switching?

What were the purposes of code-switching in lesson time?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Totally 24 students participated in this action research. Participants were at a preparatory class at Uludag University School of Foreign Languages in Bursa/Turkey. They were at elementary proficiency level and they had been taking that course for 7 months. Students were young adults and their ages ranged from 18-25. In Turkey before starting the actual programs, students may take preparatory classes at their university. For some program preparatory classes may be elective and for some programs may be compulsory. Students are arranged to the different proficiency classes according to their placement scores. They take this preparatory classes for academic and communicative purposes.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Some classroom times were audio-recorded during the research. However, classroom and students wasn't researcher's own classroom and students. Researcher audio-recorded a teacher's classroom interaction at the Uludag University School of Foreign Languages. Recording data was turned into a transcript. It was a main course lesson and topic was 'Dream Catchers'. During the lesson students listened, read some texts related to the topics. Teacher wanted them to answer some questions in the book. Teacher also wanted them to talk about their experiences and beliefs about that particular topic. Finally, these recording data were analyzed by considering the L1 use concepts. Researcher categorized the data according to the Sali's (2014) and Macaro's (2000, cited in Macaro 2005) statements about roles of code-switching in the classroom such as academic purposes, building personal relationships etc.

3. Results

Two lesson times were recorded and turned into a transcript (approximately 60 minutes). Results showed that teacher used L1 for nearly 15 minutes (1/4) of the lesson. Not only teacher but also students used L1 during the lesson time. It means that like Alshammari's (2011), Carson & Kashihara's (2012), Kayaoğlu's (2012), and Kafes' (2011) studies, teacher was in favor of using L1 in the classroom. On the other hand results showed contradiction with Nazary's (2008) study which states that Iranian students were reluctant to use L1 in the classroom. Students in the study preferred to use L1 from time to time. As Carson & Kashihara' (2012) study revealed students preferred code-switching since they were at elementary level. For clear implementation some extracts from the data which showed importance may be given.

Extract 1

Teacher: Everybody look wonderful. Today it is a special day for our women. Gerçekten bugün neşeli görünüyorsunuz (You look really wonderful today). Kadın arkadaşlarımızın kadınlar gününü kutlarım (I celebrate Women's Day of our women friends.)

Class: Teşekkürler hocam (Thank you teacher).

As it can be seen in the first extract teacher used L1 for celebrating a special day for women. This result showed that teacher used L1 for building relationships with students as Macaro (2000, cited in Macaro, 2005) stated. Since this code-switching was at the beginning of the lesson, it can be said that teacher used L1 for warming-up purpose as Kayaoğlu's (2012) study showed. On the hand, as Sali (2014) pointed teacher used L1 for social/cultures issues.

Extract 2

Teacher: Arkadaşlar galiba biraz anlamakta sorun oluştu. Dream catchers ne demek tam olarak anlayabildiniz mi? (I think it was a bit complicated for you. Did you understand what dream catcher means exactly?)

A student: Rüya yakalayıcısı hocam. (They are catching the dreams teacher)

Teacher: Tam olarak öyle değil. Dream catcher bizdeki nazar boncuğu gibi bir şey. İnsanları kötü rüyalardan koruduğuna inanılan bir şey. (Not exactly. It is like a blue bead in our culture. It is believed that dream catchers protects us from evil nighmares)

Students: Anladık hocam (We got it).

When we look that the second extract, students had some difficulty about comprehending the topic clearly. Teacher used L1 in here for clarification purposes. Students' comprehension increased with this code-switching and they answering performance changed positively at later exercises. This results showed relevance with Alshammari's (2011) results which stated that L1 would increase students' comprehension.

Extract 3

Teacher: En son rüyanda ne görmüştün Salih. Söyleyebilir misin. (What was your last dream about Salih? Can you tell us?)

A Student: Hocam tam hatırlamıyorum ama galiba telefonumla alakalı bir şey görmüştüm. Telefonum kırılıyordu aslında rüya değil de kabustu (I don't remember it exactly, but I think it was about my smart phone. My phone was broken. Actually it wasn't a dream it was a nightmare. And whole class laughs)

Teacher: Anladım harbiden kâbusmuş. Başka var mı rüyasını anlatmak isteyen. (I see. It was really a nightmare. Anyone wants to tell us his dream?)

Results of Kafes' (2008) study indicated that %6.4 L1 use was for the purpose of the humor and joke. As it is shown in the extract, results showed relevance with that study.

Extract 4

Teacher: (Looks at the attendance sheet) Now let go on. Bu arada Ahmet Tekin burada mı yoksa ben mi göremiyorum. İmzası var burada da. İki ders burada görünüyor. (By the way, Is Ahmet Tekin here? I see his signature on attendance sheet)

Student: Ahmet Selçuk olmasın hocam. (Should it be Ahmet Selçuk?)

Teacher: Yok Ahmet Selçuk'un da imzası var. Şimdi Ahmeti alana diğer Ahmet bedava mı olmuş. Güzel. Ben bunu diğer sınıflarda gördüğümde o arkadaşım, imza atan, gelsin benden özür dilesin diyorum. Bir şekilde konuyu kapatıyoruz yoksa disiplinlik bir konudur bu. Ama kendi sınıfında bunu yapmıyacağım. Kendi sınıfımda tepkim daha sert olacak. Bundan sonra Cuma öğleden sonra blok ders yok ilk yaptırımım bu. Çünkü bu iyi niyetimi suiistimal etti. Hoş bir şey değil. Çok üzüldüm şu anda. (No it is not. I think someone signed instead of him. Look guys it is serious issue. There will be some sanction for this disrespect. It is not a good think. I am very sorry about it.)

During the flow of the lesson a serious event happened. When we look at the extract we clearly can see that teacher expressed his feelings in L1. Teacher might wanted to use L1 directly since it was a serious classroom management issue. Kayaoğlu (2012) stated that teachers may use L1 for serious classroom management issues since it helps teachers to express his feeling clearly. Additionally, results showed resemblance with Sali's (2014) statement which tells that teacher may use L1 for managerial issues.

Extract 5

T: (Reads the text aloud) If you dance, if sing if you smile, this is good for your mind and psychology. O zaman bugün kadınlar günü hadi gülün gülün. Gül Emre, gül Büşra, Gül hakan gülün gülün. (Then today is women's day. Come on smile, smile, smile. smile Emre, smile Büşra, smile Hakan smile, smile, smile)

Class Laughs

Flow of lesson may be spoiled some classroom management problems. At that point a teacher should treat the problem appropriately. An attendance problem happened previously on the lesson and it effected students' motivation and mood. Results showed that teacher tried to eliminate these negative mood and tried to increase motivation. Kayaoğlu's (2012) study revealed that L1 speaking teacher were more motivational than the other. As we can see the extract teacher used L1 with humor and it cleaned up negative mood and increased students' motivation.

4. Discussion

In this action research, a particular lesson time was recorded and analyzed according to the concepts of code-switching during the lesson. Different types of results were founded. First of all, results indicated that teacher and students gave importance to the L1 use. They code-switched when it is necessary. Secondly, as literature stated, teacher used L1 for different purposes such as increasing motivation, increasing comprehension, checking understanding, and building personal relationships. Some reflections about this study results should be done. On the middle of the lesson time teacher mentioned about the attendance problem and this effected class motivation. It would be better for teacher if he brought this issue for consideration at the end of the lesson. For further times, it would be advisable for the teacher to think about this issue for more effective teaching. Audio-recording showed that teacher tried to use L2 as much as possible; however, he code switched when it was really necessary. It means that teacher was aware of the roles of L1. Overall, researcher believes that teacher's amount of L1 use was enough. However, there are some limitations of this action research. Results shouldn't be generalized since this action research dealt with the limited amount of participants. Data for this action research was collected from two lesson time. Therefore, a longitudinal research should be conducted for better results. On the other hand, a pre-test and post-test can be administered to look at the attitudes of students towards the code-switching during the lesson.

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