

Saudi EFL Teachers' and Students' Perceptions Towards Using English-Arabic Code Switching as a Teaching and Learning Strategy

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Abstract—This study aimed to investigate EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers' and students' perceptions towards using CS (code-switching) in teaching and learning English at Saudi secondary schools. It also attempted to identify EFL teachers and students' reasons for using CS in teaching and learning English in Saudi high schools. The sample of the study consisted of 100 teachers and 122 students who were randomly selected from secondary schools in the city of Riyadh. The data of the study were collected via a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. Moreover, this instrument was validated by ten university EFL professors, and its reliability was achieved by calculating Cronbach Alpha formula. The findings of the study revealed that teachers and students believed that CS was an effective strategy in helping students to understand unfamiliar topics, facilitating students' learning of new grammatical structures, increasing student-teacher interaction, and enlivening the atmosphere of the class. Finally, teachers and students agreed that the most important reasons behind using CS were increasing comprehension, avoiding misunderstanding, eliciting better responses from students, and filling gaps in a classroom conversation.

Index Terms—code-switching, perceptions, questionnaire, teaching, learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Interest in teaching English has become essential in Saudi Arabia because of its geographical, political, and economic importance as the world's largest oil producer. Hence, in 2011 there was a tendency to expand the teaching of English from kindergarten to university, relying on the pressing need of the Kingdom for that language. Therefore, the education system experienced a renovation in 2011 with the decision of the Ministry of Education to implement the start of teaching English from grade four instead of grade six. Then the Ministry of Education resolved to start the teaching of English in the second and third grades in 2018. The Ministry of Education has adopted high quality English language curricula that meet modern national standards for teaching English as part of an English language development project (Assulaimani, 2019). Although teachers are expected to use English in classrooms, they use Arabic in their language teaching classes (Dykanova, 2015). This phenomenon where teachers or students switch between languages is defined as code switching (CS).

"CS is a characteristic feature of the speech of bilingual and multilingual speakers irrespective of geographical location" (Yaseen et al., 2021, p. 110). Myers (2008) describes CS as "a linguistic term usually used when learners of a second language (L2) include elements of their mother tongue in their speech" (p. 43). Muysken (1995) suggests that CS is a very common and widespread form of bilingual interaction, demanding a considerable amount of linguistic competence in two languages.

It is likely that CS in EFL classrooms is a contentious issue among linguists, educators and decision makers (Chen & Ting, 2011). Teachers of English confront challenges in teaching low level learners for they still have not achieved a strong foundation in the language (Lee, 2016). Furthermore, many teachers admit that they continue to exploit CS as a strategy to maximize comprehension and produce a better natural learning environment (Setati, 1998).

Nowadays, a new trend considers CS to be a natural act which seems to have certain functions in the conversation done by bilinguals and multilinguals (Rabab'ah & Al-Yasin, 2017). Some recent studies suggest that CS performs an important role in L2 acquisition and that its use might be an important competence when used correctly by speakers of several languages (Yulandari et al., 2019). Since this phenomenon is considered universal, it is no wonder that it occurs in the speech of EFL students and teachers whose native language is not English. Willis (1996) asserts that teachers could permit the first language in the classroom if (a) students have queries and could not state them in English; (b) the teacher asks about the exact equivalent of vocabulary in L1; (c) the teacher has to quickly clarify a concept; (d) the students compare L2 to L1; and (e) the students are doing translation activities.

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II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although the policy of Saudi Ministry of Education stresses the need to promote EFL students' communicative competence through utilizing only L2 in the classroom, the real practice in the classrooms is different. CS is a strategy which is still practiced by teachers of English to facilitate the learning process for students when faced with a communication breakdown in English, particularly with students with limited language proficiency. Therefore, the use of Arabic in EFL classrooms presents a phenomenon which has not been explored thoroughly in the Saudi high school context.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The researchers hope that the results of this study will provide valuable feedback for EFL teachers, supervisors, curricula designers, and students in order to improve the efficiency of teaching and learning English in Saudi high schools. Besides, this study will pave the way for carrying out more studies in this important field.

IV. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study attempted to investigate EFL teachers and students' perceptions towards using CS in teaching and learning English in Saudi high schools. It also aimed to identify EFL teachers and students' reasons for using CS in teaching and learning English in Saudi high schools.

V. QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study aims to address the following questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' and students' perceptions towards using CS in teaching and learning English in Saudi high schools?
2. What are the EFL teachers' and students' reasons for using CS in teaching and learning English in Saudi high schools?

VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Recent Studies on Code-Switching*

Yaseen et al. (2021) conducted a study to investigate the frequency and the functions of code switching in informal conversations among Jordanian pilots. Moreover, it examined the most frequent English expressions that the pilots switch to in their informal Arabic discourse. The sample consisted of eight Jordanian pilots. The data of the study were collected by tape-recording their informal conversations in three sessions. The findings of the study revealed that the pilots used code-switching for the following reasons: to compensate for the lack of exact equivalent words in Arabic, to avoid interruption of communication, to replace long Arabic technical phrases with short English acronyms, to talk about aviation titles, to quote some expressions from speakers, to say numbers, to talk about names of institutions and places, and to use English formulaic phrases.

Al Tale' and AlQahtani (2022) examined the effectiveness of code-switching versus target-language-only teaching strategies on beginner students' learning and affective sustenance of reading comprehension from their points of views. It also explored the reasons for students' preference of receiving instruction via code-switching or L2 only. The sample of the study consisted of 52 female EFL Saudi University students. Furthermore, the data were collected via a questionnaire and interviews. Moreover, the results of the study showed that students advocated using code-switching as a teaching strategy in their reading comprehension classes. Finally, the study recommended adopting code-switching for EFL beginners to facilitate learning.

Patmasari et al. (2022) carried out a study to explore teachers' and students' perceptions towards using code-switching in the EFL learning. The sample of the study was composed of two teachers and forty students. The study was conducted in a senior high school in Indonesia. In addition, the data of the study was collected through a questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The results of the study indicated that teachers rarely use code-switching in the EFL classroom. However, students had positive attitudes towards the use of code-switching.

B. *Approaches to Code Switching*

There are three theoretical approaches to CS which have evolved over the last few decades: the sociolinguistic, the structural, and the psycholinguistic approaches. The sociolinguistic approach analyzes the relation between language and society (Piantari et al., 2011). According to Hymes (1972), the speaker's choice of "a particular language or language variety" in a conversation is determined by the social circumstances, norms of interaction, and areas of conversation. Sociolinguistics does not emphasize the structure of a language, but it emphasizes on "how the language is used in its social and cultural context", as well as the role of social factors behind CS. Gardner-Chloros (2009) presents three factors which are associated with CS from a sociolinguistic perspective: factors independent of speakers which impact the speakers in a certain community, "factors dependent on the speakers," and factors within the

conversation. The Structural Approach concentrates on identifying the syntactic and morphosyntactic constraints on CS (Al-Hourani, 2016; Boztepe, 2003). It tries to identify the structural features of morphosyntactic patterns underlying the grammar of CS (Boztepe, 2003). Research in this area focuses on the varieties of CS structures at which the switching between languages is possible (Othman, 2016). According to Poplack and Meechan (1995), CS is the “juxtaposition of sentences or sentence fragments, each of which is internally consistent with the morphological and syntactic (and optionally, phonological) rules of its lexifier language” (p. 200).

An important term in the structural approach to CS is constraint, “a condition restricting the combination of two languages” in a single sentence (Keller, 2020). Poplack (1980) suggests three types of constraints to the production of CS. First, “the equivalence constraint” which indicates that CS occurs “at points where juxtaposition of L1 and L2 elements does not violate a syntactic rule of either language” (p. 585). The second constraint is “size-of-constituent” which suggests that higher-levels components like “sentences and clauses” are switched more often than lower-levels components such as nouns and verbs (p. 586). Third, “the free morpheme constraint” where the “codes may be switched after any constituent in discourse provided that constituent is not a bound morpheme” (p. 586).

The psycholinguistic approach considers CS a cognitive action by which “several languages are stored and simultaneously processed in one human brain” (Schmidt, 2014). Researchers who studied CS practices under this approach covered topics such as the brain responses to CS, the comprehension of language switches, and the links between CS and the cognitive lexicon (Wang & Liu, 2016). According to Omar et al. (2012), the psycholinguistic approach, however, regards CS as being intrapersonal, focusing on individual’s internal and cognitive processes. This approach to CS deals with “language alternation that is stimulated not by the intentions of the speaker but by the specific conditions of language production” (Othman, 2016, p. 14). This means, the focus of the psycholinguistic approach is not on how the language is used (the sociolinguistic approach) nor the system (the structural approach) “but the processes taking place in the speaker’s brain: lexical items that are similar or identical in both languages can function as a trigger for the alternation from one language to another” (Othman, 2016, p. 14).

C. Types of Code Switching

Poplack (1980) conducted the first concrete and in-depth research on types of CS. He recognized three different types of CS including: “inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching” (p. 614). According to Poplack (1980), inter-sentential CS involves switching utterances from one language to another, where complete sentences from two languages occur at sentence or clause boundaries (a complete sentence or clause in L1 complements a sentence or clause in L2). Hoffmann (1991) defines inter-sentential switching as the switching which takes place between sentences, where each sentence is in different language. As in the following example, in which the speaker switches between Arabic (in *italics*) and English (in **bold**): *Endi Fekrah*. It’s amazing! (Translation: I have an idea. It’s amazing!).

The second type, intra-sentential, is using two languages “within a single sentence” (Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 101). According to Lipski (1985), the switching is “done in the middle of the sentence with no interruptions, hesitations, or pauses” (p. 19). This type of switching is considered to be the highest complicated type of switching as “the switch to a different language can either occur within clause boundary or even within the word boundary” (Nguyen, 2015, p. 15). Moreover, the complexity of this type comes from “the high probability of violation of syntactic rules, as well as the requirement of a great knowledge of both grammars and how they map onto each other” (Othman, 2016). In the following example, the speaker switches between Arabic (in *italics*) and English (in **bold**): *Al-Mawdoo3* is more complicated than I expected. (Translation: The issue is more complicated than I expected.).

Tag-switching, otherwise known as extra-sentential or emblematic CS “involves the insertion of a tag from one language into an utterance in the other language” (Romaine, 1995, p. 122). Tag-switching can be “an exclamation, a tag, or a parenthetical in another language than the rest of the sentence” (Appel & Muysken, 1987, p. 118). Tag-switching is a simple type of CS that can occur at a number of locations in utterances “without violating the syntactic rules” (Romaine, 1995, p. 122), in contrast with intra-sentential switching which involves high syntactic risk of violating grammar rules (Schmidt, 2014, p. 25). Poplack (1980) asserts that tag-switching includes small units from a language (tags and fillers) that are inserted to larger units in another language. For example, someone could switch from English (in **bold**) to Arabic (in *italics*) as follows: **You shouldn’t use your cell phone in the class.** *Tamam!* (Translation: You should not use your cell phone in the class. Okay!).

D. Views Supporting Code Switching

A number of educators concluded that CS must not be viewed as a teacher’s weakness but as an educating technique (Dash, 2002; Tang, 2002). Ellis and Shintani (2013) argue that instructors frequently relate their usage of CS to what they believe to be “a response to the demands in the classroom,” and not as a result of its cognitive importance in the learning of the target language. Miles (2004) states that it may not necessarily be productive to exclude the first language of the students so as to improve the exposure of the students to the target language. Most notably, many instructors found it difficult or almost difficult to teach the L2 without occasional recourse to the students’ first language (Cook, 2002).

Lee (2016) discovered that the majority of ESL instructors assume that CS needs to be exploited in teaching since it allows students to learn English. However, instructors feel that it should only be utilized when there is a necessity, suggesting that teachers favor to limit CS use. Similarly, Brown (2006) equally supports taking advantage of the first

language to facilitate the mastering of the target language and to harmonize different capacities of language competency. Likewise, Cook (2002) declares that teachers' CS in the class helps resemble the outside world. In a similar way, Ahmad and Jusoff (2009) report numerous CS positive functions such as enhancing vocabulary and grammar, besides relaxing students and fostering their comprehension.

E. Views Opposing Code Switching

The negative impact of CS has been discussed extensively in the literature (Then & Ting, 2011). Many scholars think that using CS in the classroom may indicate that the teaching strategy is going wrong (Willis, 1996). Similarly, Cook (2001) and Richards and Rodgers (2001), assert that CS reduces the exposure to target language. Eldridge (1996) suggests decreasing CS and expanding the usage of L2 in the classroom. He does not encourage utilizing mother tongue in the classroom because it hinders target language learning. The amount of the foreign language input is particularly vital because very small chances exist for access to target language away from the classroom (Duff & Polio, 1990). In the naturalistic approach to learning, learners should be immersed in L2, and educators should allow "the opportunity for students to be fully exposed to the target language" (Krashen & Terrell, 1983).

Cook (2002) states that if there is not one shared L1 language to communicate with all students, and if the teacher could not speak the learners' L1, CS in such classrooms definitely seems impossible. Along the same lines, Miles (2004) confirms that in multilingual classrooms where students have multiple first languages, which the teachers do not know and could not utilize in their classrooms, the use of first language would certainly not be advantageous. Martin (2004) criticized CS indicating that "the use of a local language alongside the 'official language' of the lesson is a well-known phenomenon and yet it is often lambasted as 'bad practice', blamed on the teacher's lack of English language competence" (p. 88). In language classrooms, where learners utilize L2 to learn it, CS can be viewed as deducting from the volume of exposure to L2 and presenting "a bad language model for students" (Thornbury, 1999). CS may indeed lead to lack of fluency in target language (Sert, 2005).

VII. METHOD

A. Participants

The population of the study consisted of all EFL female teachers and students enrolled in secondary public schools in the city of Riyadh in the first semester of the academic year 2020- 2021. Besides, the sample of the study was composed of 100 teachers and 122 students; all of the participants were randomly selected. The average age of the participants was 40 years for teachers and 17 years for students.

B. Instrument

The researchers developed a questionnaire utilizing the free online tool 'Google Form' for the teachers, whereas a paper-based questionnaire for the students. Although the teachers' questionnaire was designed online, it was distributed by the researchers in person to explain the objectives of the study and to invite teachers to participate. The aim of the electronic distribution was to ensure that all the questionnaire items were answered in addition to statistical considerations. The questionnaire used a 'five-point Likert scale' (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree; to 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire listed 22 items which were divided into two sections. The first section which included 10 items aimed at gathering data about teachers and students' perceptions towards using English-Arabic CS as a teaching and learning strategy. The second section which included 12 items aimed at gathering the statistics on teachers and students' reasons for using English-Arabic CS.

C. Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, the instrument was given to a validation committee consisting of ten EFL professors. The professors evaluated the questionnaire items in terms of appropriateness, comprehensibility, clarity, and overall quality. In accordance with their comments and suggestions, the wording of some items was modified before it was put into practice. To achieve the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was carried out on 21 teachers and 33 students who were excluded from the study sample. The aim of the pilot study was to examine the feasibility of the questionnaire and to ascertain if any extra modifications would be required before the main application. The pilot study on students revealed difficulty for students in understanding the meaning of CS. Accordingly, the phrase was modified from 'code switching' to 'using the Arabic language in English language classes', which seemed easier for the students to understand. Cronbach's Alpha reliability was computed for the whole items of the questionnaire. The results demonstrated the reliability and suitability of the instrument for the purpose of the study since Cronbach's Alpha was 88% for all items of the teachers' questionnaire, and 86% for students.

D. Procedure

For the implementation of the questionnaire, the researchers prepared a list that included all high schools in the city of Riyadh. The researchers then recorded the names of the schools on slips of paper, folded them and placed them in a box, reshuffled them and then picked the required number of schools randomly. Then the researchers developed a convenient schedule to visit the selected schools. After that, the researchers visited the nominated schools and met the

school principals, the teachers of English, and students of the secondary level. After explaining the purpose of study, the researchers asked the teachers and the randomly-selected students to participate in filling out the questionnaire. Teachers and students were requested to read each item carefully and then choose the answers that best represented their perceptions.

In cases when the researchers were unable to meet teachers and students at a school or if teachers or students were unwilling to participate, the researchers picked new names of schools from the box. No missing data occurred in the teachers' questionnaires as the electronic feature of the questionnaire prevented any item skipping. Similarly, the researchers checked the students' questionnaires for unanswered items after each participant finished filling up the questionnaire. Hence, based on the collected data, the responses of the participants to the questionnaire items were statistically analyzed using the SPSS. Means (M), standard deviations (SD), frequencies, and percentages were utilized. Additionally, Cronbach's Alpha reliability for the pilot study was calculated to ensure the reliability of the instrument for conducting the study.

VIII. FINDINGS

A. Findings Related to the First Question

To answer the first question, "What are EFL teachers and students' perceptions towards using CS in teaching and learning English in Saudi high schools?" means and standard deviations of teachers and students' responses were computed. Findings related to this question are presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

TABLE 1

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS USING ENGLISH-ARABIC CS AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

No.	Statement	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1	CS is an effective teaching and learning strategy.	100	384	3.84	1.245	5
2	CS creates positive attitudes among students towards learning English.	100	386	3.86	1.073	4
3	CS increases student-teacher interaction.	100	390	3.90	1.106	3
4	CS enlivens the atmosphere of the class.	100	382	3.82	1.067	6
5	CS helps students to gain better results in exams.	100	373	3.73	1.127	7
6	CS should not be used excessively in the EFL classroom.	100	223	2.23	1.179	10
7	CS helps students to understand unfamiliar topics.	100	421	4.21	.9020	1
8	CS facilitates students' learning of new grammatical structures.	100	404	4.04	1.053	2
9	CS enhances students' co-operative learning.	100	360	3.60	1.064	8
10	CS is necessary to explain cultural differences.	100	295	2.95	1.666	9
Total				3.61	1.148	

It is obvious from Table 1 that teachers believe CS is an effective strategy in introducing unfamiliar topics. This finding is drawn from statement 7 which scored the highest mean score (4.21) and was ranked the first. Moreover, teachers think that CS is useful in learning new structures. This finding is taken from statement 8 which had a very high mean (4.04) and got the second rank. Another important finding is that CS increases student-teacher interaction. This is reflected in statement 3 which was ranked the third and had a high mean (3.90). In addition, according to teachers, CS is an effective teaching and learning strategy. It creates positive attitudes among students towards learning English and enlivens the atmosphere of the class. These results are drawn from statements 2, 1, and 4 which were ranked the fourth, the fifth, and the sixth with high means (3.86, 3.84, and 3.82 respectively).

TABLE 2

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS USING ENGLISH-ARABIC CS AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

No.	Statement	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1	CS is an effective teaching and learning strategy.	122	453	3.71	1.243	8
2	CS creates positive attitudes among students towards learning English.	122	448	3.67	1.181	9
3	CS increases student-teacher interaction.	122	512	4.20	0.985	2
4	CS enlivens the atmosphere of the class.	122	493	4.04	1.007	5
5	CS helps students to gain better results in exams.	122	506	4.15	1.088	4
6	CS should not be used excessively in the EFL classroom.	122	310	2.54	1.274	10
7	CS helps students to understand unfamiliar topics.	122	553	4.53	0.718	1
8	CS facilitates students' learning of new grammatical structures.	122	510	4.18	0.971	3
9	CS enhances students' co-operative learning.	122	474	3.89	1.092	6
10	CS is necessary to explain cultural differences.	122	457	3.75	1.125	7
Total				3.86	1.068	

Table 2 reveals that students agree that CS is a useful strategy in introducing unfamiliar topics. This finding is deduced from statement 7 which scored the highest mean score (4.53) and was ranked the first. Furthermore, students support the claim that CS increases student-teacher interaction, learning of new grammatical structures, and opportunities of better results in exams. These results are drawn from statements 3, 8, and 5 which were ranked the second, third, and the fourth with very high means (4.20, 4.18, and 4.15 respectively). Besides, students believe that CS

enlivens the atmosphere of the class and enhances students' co-operative learning. These results are taken from statements 4 and 9 which got the fifth and sixth rank with high means (4.04 and 3.89).

B. Findings Related to the Second Question

To answer the second question, "What are the EFL teachers and students' reasons for using CS in teaching and learning English in Saudi high schools?", means and standard deviations of teachers and students' responses were calculated. Findings related to this question are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

TABLE 3
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF TEACHERS' REASONS FOR USING ENGLISH-ARABIC CS AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

No.	Statement	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1	Explain new abstract words and concepts.	100	417	4.17	0.842	1
2	Save time and effort.	100	385	3.85	1.095	4
3	Increase comprehension.	100	398	3.98	0.953	2
4	Elicit better responses from students.	100	397	3.97	1.000	3
5	Avoid the embarrassment of memory lapses.	100	351	3.51	1.185	9
6	Avoid misunderstanding.	100	383	3.83	1.035	5
7	Maintain discipline.	100	287	2.87	1.220	12
8	Reduce students' anxiety in the classroom.	100	299	2.99	1.508	11
9	Elucidate assignment guidelines.	100	375	3.75	1.067	7
10	Acclaim students well.	100	311	3.11	1.348	10
11	Correct students' errors.	100	354	3.54	1.176	8
12	Fill gaps in a classroom conversation.	100	379	3.79	1.104	6
Total				3.61	1.127	

It is clear from Table 3 that teachers agree that the most important reason of using CS is to explain new abstract words and concepts. This finding is taken from statement 1 which had the first rank and the highest mean (4.17). In addition, teachers also believe that CS is used to increase comprehension, elicit better responses from students, and save time and effort. These results are reflected in statements 3, 4, and 2 which were ranked the second, the third, and the fourth with very high means (3.98, 3.97, and 3.85). Moreover, other important reasons according to teachers are to avoid misunderstanding and fill gaps in a classroom conversation. These results are clear in statements 6 and 12 which scored high means (3.83 and 3.79) were ranked the fifth and the sixth. On the other hand, teachers do not believe that CS is used to reduce students' anxiety in the classroom and to maintain discipline. This finding is taken from statements 8 and 7 which had the lowest means (2.99 and 2.87) and the lowest ranks (the eleventh and the twelfth).

TABLE 4
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF STUDENTS' REASONS FOR USING ENGLISH-ARABIC CS AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

No.	Statement	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1	Explain new abstract words and concepts.	122	484	3.97	.9350	7
2	Save time and effort.	122	429	3.52	1.166	11
3	Increase comprehension.	122	537	4.40	.8400	1
4	Elicit better responses from students.	122	515	4.22	.9400	3
5	Avoid the embarrassment of memory lapses.	122	473	3.88	1.302	9
6	Avoid misunderstanding.	122	506	4.15	1.050	4
7	Maintain discipline.	122	399	3.27	1.336	12
8	Reduce students' anxiety in the classroom.	122	516	4.23	1.097	2
9	Elucidate assignment guidelines.	122	481	3.94	1.187	8
10	Acclaim students well.	122	433	3.55	1.373	10
11	Correct students' errors.	122	492	4.03	1.128	6
12	Fill gaps in a classroom conversation.	122	494	4.05	1.027	5
Total				3.93	1.115	

It is evident from Table 4 that students believe that increasing comprehension, reducing students' anxiety in the classroom, and eliciting better responses are the most important reasons behind using CS in the EFL classroom. These results are drawn from items 3, 8, and 4 which are ranked the first, the second, and the third with the highest means (4.40, 4.23, and 4.22 respectively). Furthermore, the other important reasons according to students are avoiding misunderstanding, filling gaps in a classroom conversation, and correcting students' errors. These results are represented in statements 6, 12, and 11 which scored high means (4.15, 4.05, and 4.03 respectively) with the fourth, the fifth, and the sixth ranks.

IX. DISCUSSION

Concerning the first question, the results indicated that teachers and students alike advocated using CS to help students understand unfamiliar topics. This result is in line with the findings of Cahyani et al. (2018) and Yaseen et al. (2021). Besides, this result is consistent with Ahmad and Jusoff (2009) who found that the participant teachers used CS to perform various classroom functions including checking for understanding and explaining unfamiliar words. However, it is contrast with the findings of Cook (2001), Martin (2004), Sert (2005), Thornbury (1999).

A second important finding is that teachers and students stressed that CS is an effective strategy in learning new grammatical structure. This finding is in agreement with Samani and Narafshan (2016) who showed that CS was more advantageous to teaching grammar and writing than to teaching speaking. To some extent, this result is not particularly consistent with the finding of Alhassoon (2013).

In addition, the results of the current study revealed that both teachers and students believed that CS increases student-teacher interaction. This result is in harmony with Muslim et al. (2018) and Shafi et al. (2020). It is also in compliance with Gil's (2007) study in which the researcher observed that CS in teacher-student interaction in the EFL classroom facilitated interaction and promoted foreign language proficiency. This result is supported by Alghamdi (2017) and Melwani (2017). Alghamdi (2017) believed that "English-only classes do not suit beginners and mid-level students because they need to understand what they are ought to do in class" (p. 85). This is also in line with the main conclusion from Melwani (2017) declares, "the notion that L1 plays a significant role in classroom interaction" (p. 62).

A final important perception shared by the participants is that CS enlivens the atmosphere of the class. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Yao (2011) "most participant teachers reported that they would switch to Chinese to tell a joke or short story to enliven the atmosphere of their classes" (p. 23). According to Bo (2017), in EFL classes, when students "doze off occasionally," teachers have to find some solutions. According to Bo, timely CS will enliven the atmosphere and make English classes "colorful and fun". Dykhanova (2015) confirmed that CS creates "relaxing and warm atmosphere in the class and easy comprehension" (p. 14). This finding is in line with the findings of Patmasari et al. (2022).

With respect to the second question of the study, "What are the EFL teachers and students' reasons for using CS in teaching and learning English in Saudi high schools?", the results revealed that teachers and students agreed that the most important reason behind using CS was increasing comprehension. This finding is compatible with many previous studies (Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009; Alkathery, 2014; Suryadi, 2019). Particularly, this result is consistent with that mentioned by Rabab'ah and Al-Yasin (2017), who found that teachers who participated in their study believed that the most important reason of CS was "to help students improve comprehension" (p. 315). Similarly, the influential role of CS in increasing comprehension is in accordance with Alshammari's (2011) results, which affirm the usefulness of CS for enhancing language learning and increasing students' comprehension.

Moreover, the findings of this study showed that teachers and students highly agreed that CS is used to avoid misunderstanding. This result is in congruence with existing research in this area (Guataquira, 2018; Rabab'ah & Al-Yasin, 2017; Sert, 2005). For instance, Sert (2005) claimed that CS is a strategy used to render the intended meaning. Moreover, Ramasari and Kumalasari (2018) stated that CS is critical to keeping the interaction run smoothly and avoiding besides, the participants tended to use CS to avoid misunderstanding during conversations.

In addition, the results of this study revealed that there are other reasons for using CS that obtained high rating by the participants, including eliciting better responses from students and filling gaps in a classroom conversation. The latter point, gap-filling, may be explained in accordance with the tag-switching approach. This approach to CS entails the insertion of a small tag from a language into a conversation in another language (Romaine, 1995). Poplack (1980) called the small insertions from a language "tags and fillers" that are inserted into larger units in another language. Romaine (1995) stated that this is "a simple type of CS that can occur at a number of points in utterances without violating the syntactic rules" (p. 122).

X. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concluded that CS is as an effective teaching strategy for EFL high school students. It serves a plethora of functions and reasons such as understanding unfamiliar topics and increasing comprehension, which might be helpful in improving English language learning. However, in foreign language learning contexts where the teacher is the only source of target language for students, exposure to L2 is pivotal to ensure successful learning of the foreign language. Accordingly, teachers should be aware of the benefits and drawbacks of CS in the EFL classroom; and they should use CS judiciously and avoid overuse of the students' mother tongue.

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