

## The Effects of L1 Interference on the Occurrence of Code-Switching in the Algerian Context

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**Abstract:** *The sociolinguistic phenomenon of Code-Switching (CS) was addressed in dramatically different academic contexts where English is spoken as a first language (L1) (i.e., inner circle), as a second language (i.e., outer circle), as well as where English is spoken as a foreign language (EFL) (i.e., expanding circle). Nevertheless, very few studies examined the issue of CS among undergraduate students in expanding circle countries such as Algeria. Basically, this study sought to find answers that would, firstly, help apprehend the overriding reason (s) that stimulate the occurrence of CS in the third year students' oral production, secondly, identify the communicative functions of English-Arabic CS in the students' class interaction, and thirdly, gauge its practicality and effectiveness in multilingual classes. Following a qualitative research approach, a case study design was adopted with a purposively (deliberately) chosen sample. Accordingly, data were collected by means of two tools of inquiry, namely observation and an unstructured questionnaire. The findings revealed that the underlying factor that prompted the occurrence of language-switching was the linguistic interference that germinated from the students' L1, among other subsidiary linguistic factors. Furthermore, it was found that CS grants its applicators the opportunity to reiterate what they exactly said in another way, to hold the floor and continue speaking for an extended period, and to insist on what was being communicated. Regarding CS technique, it was concluded that it might be considered as a productive and, simultaneously, a detrimental communication strategy to develop EFL students' speaking competence. Finally, the findings of this study supported the initially formulated hypotheses, and, thus, reported positive results.*

**Keywords:** Code-Switching (CS), communicative functions, dominant language, foreign language multilingual classes, speaking competence

### 1. Introduction

All human beings are genetically endowed with a mental capacity that enables them to acquire and, concurrently, learn a plethora of completely different languages besides their first language (L1). This is exactly why people, during the process of communication, typically make use of multiple usages of various linguistic repertoires to express their thoughts, as well as their feelings. Having the ability to

employ grammatically different languages in exclusively different linguistic contexts has, consequently, made individuals employ several codes even inside educational (academic) settings.

The practice of moving back and forth between two or more languages/varieties within the same sentence or between the speakers' turns is known, from a sociolinguistic perspective, as CS (Mesthrie, Swann and Leap, 2000). The latter is deemed a widespread sociolinguistic phenomenon that has made its mark and left its impression in bi/multilingual classes. It is precisely for this reason that investigators endeavored to tackle its prevalent occurrence in EFL classes with a focus on shedding light on the most significant factor that does prompt its manifestations (instances), mainly in educational spheres.

As might be foreseen, learning the English language with the goal of accumulating a sound knowledge apropos of its linguistic forms and facets becomes an integral practice, especially for those who choose to enroll in it with the aim of complying with their personal, as well as professional demands. Howbeit, and as it is explicitly revealed by EFL learners, learning English language is not as easy as it may appear to be. Rather, it is an intricate process, particularly for those whose major aims of learning are contingent on speaking it in a way that conveniently conforms to its linguistic frameworks and cultural values.

It is important to underline the fact that in real-life contexts, i.e., in EFL classes, the process of learning is typically impacted and directed by countless linguistic and social variables, such as the learning environment, the learners' prior linguistic knowledge (schemata), their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, region together with many other subsidiary factors (Labov, 2001). However, and based on what was observed in the Algerian EFL classes, when it comes to the central linguistic factor that affects the assessment of how proficient and appropriate EFL learners are in communicating their thoughts using the target language, the effect of their L1 seems to take the lion's share. This is mainly in controlling what cannot be conveyed relying solely on English. In view of what was mentioned in the milieu of the latter, it has been widely recognized that the more learners resort to their L1 in L2 learning, the easier and faster they seem to comprehend its convoluted and tangled linguistic items and suitably use them the way they are naturally employed in their authentic contexts.

In the Algerian context, research into promoting EFL learners' linguistic competence conjointly with communicative competence (as the latter proceeds only so far as the former is correctly built) is not given much importance. This happens because the point of emphasis of the majority of language instructors rests principally on either developing the pure linguistic knowledge which gives primacy to the mastery of the productive and receptive skills ascribed to the target language

(i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) or on the communicative competence, with the latter being deprived from an underlying competence (i.e., linguistic competence).

Undoubtedly, the decelerated degree of interest in communicative competence studies can potentially be attributed to the lack of sociolinguistic knowledge perceived by teachers and learners vis-à-vis English language, lack of training, busy schedules, in addition to the integration of the old-fashionable language teaching methodologies and approaches. The latter put a high premium on fostering learners' inner criteria of correctness at the expense of their external criteria of appropriateness. More succinctly, the current study was inspired by the researchers' observations that the third-year students' oral productions were rather unsatisfactory and unreflective with their oral skill expected at their level. For the aforementioned reason, these students were obliged to alternatively shift to other languages/ varieties which are likely to maintain a flow in their oral performances. Thus, based on the assumptions laid down in the research findings in tandem with context specificities, the present study aims at investigating the effects of L1 interference on the occurrence of CS among inexperienced learners in EFL classes.

## **2. Objectives of the study**

The general objective of the current study seeks to saliently probe into a more intensive and profound understanding of the effects of learners' L1 interference on the occurrence of CS in EFL classes. More specifically, this study aims at: a) examining the occurrence of CS in the students' talk, b) divulging the potential reason (s) behind alternating codes during class communication, i.e., uncovering whether or not the students' L1 interference does impact their communication performances and, therefore, makes them alternate from L2 to their L1 during class discourse, and c) accentuating the effects of CS on the development of the students' speaking competence.

With the goal of investigating as systematically and plausibly as possible what was included in the content of the research problem, four central research questions were formulated. These questions are as follows:

- a) What is the fundamental reason that triggers the occurrence of CS in EFL classes discourse?
- b) Which pattern (s) of CS is the most commonly used one (s) by EFL students in their class conversational tasks?
- c) When and for what communicative purpose (s) do EFL students code-switch?
- d) What are the effects of CS on the development of the students' speaking competence?

Based on the above-mentioned research questions, the following research hypotheses were proposed:

- a) The underlying reason behind the occurrence of CS in an EFL class is the unavoidable linguistic interference stemming from the students' L1.
- b) The most frequently used patterns of CS are the intra-sentential and extra-sentential types.
- c) EFL students shift from English language to their L1 when engaging in the communicative tasks to keep the continuity/ flow of their communication process and continue speaking for a more prolonged period.
- d) EFL students may guarantee that they will not be blocked by any communicative barriers when they code-switch; yet, they cannot assure whether or not their speaking competence is progressively developing.

In the forthcoming section, the point of emphasis primarily rests on elaborating a theoretical background that discerns the commonalities and dissimilarities between some language contact phenomena, including CS, code-mixing (CM), and borrowing, which may seemingly look alike in order not to give rise to certain intricacies that may create some sort of confusion. Subsequently, the core of the following section proceeds to specify the decisive factors that stipulate students to switch codes during their class oral discourse. Finally, a succinct background history of research on language transfer minding diverse triple perspectives, namely the behaviorist view, mentalist view, and cognitive view, is, then, presented.

### **3. Review of related literature**

#### **3.1 Code-switching and other language contact phenomena**

From a broad perspective, contact between different varieties is deemed a social phenomenon that, very often, encompasses a linguistic dimension. Typically, once different linguistic groups contact one another, they have a natural, spontaneous tendency to seek ways to sidestep the linguistic hindrances confronting them. Oftentimes, contact between different linguistic systems may create different sociolinguistic outcomes, including mainly multilingualism, borrowing, CS, and language death (also known as language extinction). Notwithstanding the momentousness of the aforementioned language contact consequences, and as laid down in the scope of the present study, the phenomenon of CS is considered as the main contact induced-outcome that this study strives to find out.

Prior to comprehending the phenomenon of CS, it is a prerequisite to define ahead certain key terms. Many linguists and sociolinguists, whose major concerns hinged on examining the technique of CS using interlocutors of communicative events, offered several denotations and characterizations for that phenomenon

depending on the nature and the peculiarities associated with the studies they undertook (Poplack, 1980; Gumperz, 1982; Wei, 1998; Milroy and Myusken, 1995; Ritchie and Bhatia, 2008). In its broadest generic sense, CS is, as Gumperz (1982) defines it, a communicative practice that refers to "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems" (as cited in Cantone 2007:54). In alignment with this idea, Ritchie and Bhatia (2008:337) provide their working definition for CS. They postulate:

We use the term code-switching (CS) to refer to the use of various linguistic units (words, phrases, clauses, and sentences) primarily from two participating grammatical systems across sentence boundaries within a speech event. In other words, CS is intersentential and may be subject to discourse principles. It is motivated by social and psychological factors.

On the same train of thoughts, Poplack (1981) claims that the phenomenon of CS refers to the alternative use of two different grammatical systems within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent. Even more than that, while trying to linguistically evaluate the substance of CS as a conversational device, Wei (1998) considers CS as a boundary-leveling or a boundary-maintaining communication strategy used by interlocutors who are mutually intelligible regarding the communicative resources from where the codes they use are drawn so that communication can proceed.

Regarding the foregoing theoretical foundations and reviews of CS, it is obvious that scholars look at CS from different angles and this is not surprising as these scholars do distinctively perceive the practice of moving back and forth between different languages on account of the nature, underpinnings, and idiosyncrasies of the studies they conducted. Nonetheless, the connection that can be extracted in this respect is that all of these scholars do, in one way or another, concur particularly on elaborating and expounding the gist of CS since they considered it as a naturally-occurring speech behavior among bi/multilingual speakers who tend to alternatively shift to distinct verbal systems for the sake of making their communication act rhetorically meaningful. The general point to be made here is that instances of such a conversational technique are typically present in a myriad of multilingual contexts, especially in the educational ones. It is exactly why it is sometimes not easy to classify it as its categorization goes in conjunction with the setting in which it occurs.

Irrespective of CS along with its instances that are designed to serve certain conversational intents and purposes, it has been assumed that when two linguistic codes get in touch, an excess of other language contact phenomena, including

particularly CM and borrowing, may potentially spring into action. Concepts like these are, in a certain sense, obscure and confusing. Therefore, in order to avert any kind of misconception and misinterpretation, a conspicuous demarcation that delineates the meticulous dissimilitude between these sociolinguistic phenomena must be grounded.

Indeed, both of the two terms CS and CM may apparently seem to be referentially synonymous. Nonetheless, based on their proper and decent functionality, these two concepts are not and cannot operationally be identical synonyms and, thus, they cannot be used and referred to indiscriminately and/ or interchangeably. For this reason, in an attempt to functionally segregate between CS and CM, Ritchie and Bhatia (2008:337) offer the following analytical definition for CM:

We use the term code-mixing (CM) to refer to the mixing of various linguistic units (morphemes, words, modifiers, phrases, clauses, and sentences) primarily from two participating grammatical systems within a sentence. In other words, CM is intrasentential and is constrained by grammatical principles, and [may] be motivated by social and psychological factors.

A conjecture that can be drawn here is that both CS and CM are relatively two distinct sociolinguistic phenomena that may come into play when two or more languages come into contact. While the former occurs at the level of sentential boundaries, meaning that one sentence or utterance is in one code and the other in another, the latter refers to the shift that happens at the level of clausal boundaries, meaning that two codes are employed within one single clause (Saou, 2020).

Apart from CM, borrowing is also perceived as the by-product of language contact situations. Philologists, including Poplack (1981) and many other linguists, decipher that no one language is completely exempted from the inclusion of foreign basics. In common parlance, borrowing is, as Trudgill (1992) puts it, a process through which multilingual speakers tend to insert loanwords in a sentence or an utterance that is in a totally different language. Eventually, these loanwords will become accepted as integral parts of the base language. In light of this, it can be concluded that borrowing is an interactional sociolinguistic practice whereby speakers of language A tend to adapt a linguistic element from language B and make it a persistent part that matches the structural rules of their verbal communication system.

### 3.2 Patterns of code-switching

As far as CS classification is concerned, scholars like Milroy and Muysken (1995), Blom and Gumperz (1982), and Poplack (1981) suggest different typological frameworks that account for the phenomenon of CS. However, the prototypical categorization of CS is the one proposed by Poplack (2000), who identifies three major types of CS, namely extra-sentential CS, inter-sentential CS, and intra-sentential CS.

Extra-sentential switching, also labeled as tag-switching, refers to the insertion of certain tag elements into a sentence/ utterance that is completely written/uttered in another language. Differently stated, extra-sentential CS denotes the use of short tags containing specific restrictions that do not violate the structural rules of the base language (Poplack, 2000). Examples of tags might include:

This lesson is quite clear, / فهمتوه /?

Meaning: This lesson is quite clear, **understood?**

(Note that the tag-element "فهمتوه" in the Algerian Arabic means "**have you understood it?**").

Inter-sentential switches consist of language switches that occur at the level of sentential boundaries, where one clause/ sentence is in one language and the other entirely in another language. Occurring within the same sentence or between speakers' turns, this type of CS demands a greater competence level in both languages being spoken in order to linguistically match the corresponding rules of the donor and the recipient languages (Poplack, 2000; Myers-Scotton, 2006). An example of inter-sentential switching might include:

/ هذا الدرس صعب/. Yet, we need to do our best to achieve better results.

Meaning: /**This lesson is tough**/. Yet, we need to do our best to achieve better results.

(Note that the sentence "هذا الدرس صعب" in the Algerian Arabic means "**this lesson is difficult**").

Lastly, intra-sentential CS refers to certain cases where lexical items and grammatical features from a completely different language are utilized within one single sentence/ utterance (Poplack, 2000). This sort of CS is, according to Poplack (1980), the most sophisticated type among the three, as it involves a shift of smaller units, such as the mixing of affixes, words, phrases, and clauses from more than one linguistic code within the same sentence or speech event. An example of intra-sentential CS can be seen in the following sentence:

/ بغيت نخدم/ the passport because I want to travel overseas.

Meaning: /**I would like to set up**/ my passport because I want to travel overseas.

(Note that the expression "بغيت نخدم" in the Algerian Arabic means "**I would like to set up**").

### 3.3 Reasons for classroom code-switching

In educational contexts, where English is regarded as a FL, CS is perceived as a first-aid device that learners resort to, especially true if their linguistic knowledge vis-à-vis L2 is relatively inadequate. In agreement with this idea, Oubaidullah (2016:926) proves, “Code-switching becomes a natural phenomenon and an inevitable part of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), especially in EFL classrooms”.

There were several studies in which researchers, like King and Hornberger (2008), attempted to investigate the bottom-line of classroom CS. They contend that the latter is used to refer to the exploitation of more than one language, by the classroom agents (i.e., teachers and students), in pedagogical settings. Otherwise stated, when classroom partners tend to alternatively switch between constructively diverse linguistic systems, then they are with classroom CS.

Some scholars view the occurrence of CS in bilingual classes as a rather hindering communication strategy which may restrain both the teaching and learning processes. By the same token, Elridge (1996:304) ascertains, “it had been assumed that code-switching in the classroom was a counter-productive phenomenon and the whole focus of discussion centered around ways of preventing it, with almost no consideration of what caused it in the first place”. According to Inuwa, Christopher, and Bt. Bakrini (2014), learners switch codes due to some unavoidable linguistic constraints and/or some social aspects. In this regard, Rios and Campos (2013:388) uphold that the classroom agents shift codes due to manifold reasons which are as follows:

- Expressing some notions that are better expressed in the other language;
- Frequent exposure to given items in one language;
- Cultural untranslatability (cannot find words with the same cultural meaning in the other language that represent what they really mean);
- Items are more commonly used in either language A or B, but not in both;
- Expressing emphasis or contrast;
- A mechanism to control addressees and exclude them from the conversation;
- The participants in the conversation are bilingual;
- Filling the gaps when there is a vocabulary limitation;
- Explaining specific items or negotiating meaning; and
- Expressing feelings like excitement, agreement, disagreement, fear, anger, and solidarity (Rios and Campos, 2013:388).

### **3.4 Background history of research on mother tongue interference**

One of the most controversial issues that received considerable attention in second language acquisition (SLA) and pedagogy is L1 interference. As a matter of fact, there are as many definitions as the number of scholars who attempted to propose an inclusive explanation of what does the concept of “mother tongue interference”, also known as language transfer, actually mean? According to Odlin (1989:27), “transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other knowledge that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired”.

Furthermore, in the opinion of Denizer (2017), L1 interference can be considered as a transfer that may influence the process of language learning both positively and negatively. In the same vein, Corder (1980) adopts the view that when learners’ L1 is formally similar to L2, learners will pass smoothly along the progressively developing continuum than where it is different. In the meantime, Corder (1983:28) comments “the greater the degree of difference/distance, the larger the learning task, or to put it in another way, the longer the learning path to be traversed between L2 and L1”. From this perspective, it can be inferred that “when there are no major differences between L1 and L2, the transfer will make language learning easier, whereas, when there are differences, the learners’ L1 knowledge may interfere in learning L2, negative transfer will occur” (Sárosdy, Bencze, Poór and Vadnay, 2006:124).

At this point, it is quite worthy to note that during the twentieth century, the evolution of research on language transfer fell principally under three significant viewpoints, namely the behaviorist view, the mentalist view, and the cognitive view. The behaviorist view regarding language transfer was circumscribed by habit formation with the latter being initially activated by a stimulus accompanied by a response. Originally, behaviorists argue that language learning can be fortified if and only if: a) learners do actively respond to a given stimulus, b) promote target-like responses and repair non-target-like ones, and c) breaking down sophisticated language structures into manageable constituents (chunks) and acquiring them little by little (Lanfeng, 2010).

As opposed to behaviorists, mentalists strongly believe that human beings are innately born with a mental ability that qualifies them to acquire and learn simultaneously different languages, in addition to their L1. For them, language mastery is insubordinate to how similar or varied L1’s and L2’s syntactic structures are. Rather, it is dependent on certain inner/ mental abilities that are most likely to help formulate correct L2 grammatical structures. Per contra, cognitivists, such as Faerch and Kasper (1987), assume that learning other different types of knowledge necessitates certain cognitive systems, such as perception, memory, problem-

solving, and information processing (as cited in Kelleman, 1977). Equally important, they argue that language transfer is not triggered solely by the number of equivalences and imbalances between L1 and L2. For them, L1 interference can be stimulated by virtue of some effective elements like social factors, language distance, psychotypology, and certain developmental elements that negatively affect interlanguage development (Lanfeng, 2010).

In summation, when learning a FL, learners are expected to use their L1 at different stages with a focus on fulfilling certain objectives ascribed to the target language. In essence, language transfer has been, as historically recorded, reassesses several times on different occasions minding three different perspectives. From a behavioristic point of view, transfer is subject to habit formation and is frequently restricted to the correspondences between L1's and L2's syntactic structures. In view of this, the degree of transferability depends on the convergences and/ or divergences between the native and the target language. Despite their significant contributions, in that they considered L1 to be increasingly important in L2 learning, behaviorists overvalued the role of L1 and neglected other vital factors, such as learners' individual differences. Contrary to behaviorists, mentalists argue that learning a FL is typically circumscribed by the ability to construct L2 as an independent linguistic system, a matter where the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) is severely attacked. The shortcomings of the mentalist standpoint stimulated the growth of another view called the cognitive view. Cognitivists claimed that language learning entails the same cognitive systems as learning other types of knowledge. Keeping this in mind, cognitivists emphasize that the extent to which L1 and L2 are similar and/ or different from each other cannot, on its own, predict the transfer, but it must interact with other linguistic factors.

It is essential to pinpoint here that reviewing the different theoretical points related to the problem under-scrutiny was primordial. Accordingly, the overall synopsis of the contribution of the different literature resides not only in delineating the different theoretical foundations that underpin the problem that started the present study, but also, and quite importantly, in theoretically answering the different questions related to the study undertaken. As regards its significance, this scientific investigation serves to gain more insights into the effects of L1 interference on prompting the occurrence of CS in the students' talk. Considerably, this scientific inquiry is abundantly fertile in that it contributes primarily to the domain of Applied Linguistics and, secondly, to the field of Sociolinguistics since it is meant to serve as an authentic profile towards the realization of those communication dilemmas that are habitually confronted by EFL learners while trying to produce a coherent and cohesive oral discourse. This will, in turn, make

EFL instructors recognize the roots from where learners' language speaking inconveniences are germinated.

Additionally, this investigatory project raises certain considerations which provide clear explanations and justifications to the comprehensibility of the undeniable role that learners' L1 interference, be it positive or negative, plays in the overall process of EFL teaching and learning. Taking this into account, EFL teachers are supposed to find out more effective and practical language teaching methods which may help learners bridge the lexical gaps and overcome those speaking barriers that may potentially obstruct their oral performances and, hence, make their L1 the primary communicative device to carry out their oral speech.

#### **4. Research methodology**

##### **4.1 Participants**

The third year students enrolled in the section of English at Biskra University constituted the population of this study. Attributable to the fact that this research area belongs to the social sciences domain, the targeted sample (including both males and females, between 20 to 22 years old) was purposively assigned following the tenets of one qualitative sampling mode called the "purposive sampling technique" to proportionately study a small fraction of a large population.

##### **4.2 Data elicitation techniques**

According to Jonker and Pennink (2010:40), "the choice of methodology [must be] framed by the nature of the question and by the paradigmatic considerations with regard to knowing". Likewise, considering the nature of the present study along with the audience targeted, a non-participant observation coupled with an unstructured questionnaire was conducted. In view of this, the researchers could possibly collect direct and immediate information apropos of the questions that initiated their research project.

Regarding the data collection procedures, the classroom observation was the principal data-gathering instrument that the researchers primarily relied on to obtain the basic information. The classroom observation had been scheduled in February 2020. It lasted for two weeks, a total of seven hours with two different Oral Expression teachers. Thereafter, in an attempt to cross-check the observational data, an unstructured questionnaire was supplemented. Before having posted the student's questionnaire, the researchers forwarded it to seven teachers of Oral Expression and five students (not necessarily from the population) to pilot and validate it. After having piloted and validated the student's questionnaire, the researchers uploaded it to the Facebook group of the selected sample.

## 5. Findings and discussion

### 5.1 The Observation

#### 5.1.1 Students' most commonly used languages

Table 1: The frequently used languages during the class discourse

Groups	Items	Frequency	Percentage
06	Switching from English to Arabic	219	89%
	Switching from Arabic to English	26	11%
	Switching to other languages	00	00%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>100%</b>
05	Switching from English to Arabic	155	78%
	Switching from Arabic to English	43	22%
	Switching to other languages	00	00%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>100%</b>

Given the fact that the Algerian educational contexts are multilingual, this study sought to figure out the languages that were typically employed in the students' talk during their class discussion. According to the observed groups, the most frequently used languages besides to English language were Arabic and French languages. Based on the researchers' notes, and as shown in the table above, the students, in both of the two groups, did constantly employ their L1 as it is the language they master the most. In view of this, these students used Arabic language and some varieties related to it to express their beliefs, assumptions, confusions, misunderstandings, and excitements. Apart from this, it has been pointed out that these students did continually turn to their L1 as they qualify it as a primary mechanism that helps them reach what cannot be reached using English language.

In addition to Arabic language, a small minority of the observed groups used French language for two different reasons. Taking into account group six, the students used French language because they linguistically master it more than English language. Whereas, with reference to group five, French language was the most frequently- resorted-to language by the observed students not because of their linguistic incompetence in English language, but because they wanted to show off their proficiency in languages they master other than English.

### 5.1.2 Types of CS

Table 2: The patterns of CS employed in the class discourse

Groups	Frequency	Items	Percentage
06	Extra-sentential CS	110	45%
	Intra-sentential CS	90	37%
	Inter-sentential CS	45	18%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>100%</b>
05	Extra-sentential CS	98	49%
	Intra-sentential CS	75	38%
	Inter-sentential CS	25	18%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to Poplack's typology (1980), CS can be subdivided into three major types, namely extra-sentential CS, intra-sentential CS, and inter-sentential CS. Based on Poplack's three-pronged classification (1980), the present study attempted to integrate the different types of CS in the observational checklist and try to examine the frequency of their occurrences in the students' talk. In fact, the students, in both of the two groups (Groups five and six), employed the three mentioned types of CS. Nonetheless, the most frequently used types of CS were the extra-sentential and intra-sentential types. Thus, when aiming to engage in their class conversation, the students reverted to their L1 in order to insert some lexical items. Consequently, They resulted in producing the first part of their utterances in one language (English) and the other in another language (Arabic). The students used this type of CS to give equivalents of utterances, expressions, and proverbs in an attempt to make the addressee attain the message conveyed as clearly as possible. Examples of intra-sentential CS included:

*You should always be optimistic because /tôt ou tard, la vie te donnera ce que tu mérites/.*

Meaning: *You should always be happy because life will, sooner or later, give you what you deserve.*

*/Tu dois vivre avec tous que vous rendez positive et heureuse/ because life is too short.*

Meaning: *You have to live with what makes you positive and pleased because life is too short.*

Additionally, extra-sentential switching (i.e., tag-switching), the switch from one language to another within one single clause, is another type of CS that was frequently used by the groups observed. This pattern of CS was usually used when the students inserted certain tag-elements (usually from their L1) in their utterances. Examples of these elements included: / لازم/= obligatory, / جواب/= answer, / مثال/= such as, / هاذي هي/= that is it, / الخليفة/= caliph. However, a small minority, i.e., 9% to 10%, (from groups five and six respectively), intended to incorporate some tag-elements by referring to French language. A case in point, the students used: / *exactement*/= exactly, / *voilà*/= that is it, / *en particulier*/= particularly/ in particular.

Besides, inter-sentential switching, the change of codes that happens at the level of sentential boundaries, was the least frequently employed pattern of CS in the students' talk. This type of CS was used to discuss certain topics linked to the students' personal identities, assumptions, culture, traditions, and social belongingness. Examples of this type of CS entailed:

*What do you think if we undertake presentations? / نظن راح يكون أحسن? /*

Meaning: *What do you think if we undertake presentations? I assume it will be better.*

*Personnellement, j'ai aucune idée. What about you?*

Meaning: *Personally, I do not have any idea. What about you?*

## 5.2 The questionnaire

### 5.2.1 L1 interference and the reasons that trigger it

Table 3. Main causes that necessitate employing the students' L1 during class discussion

The responses	Number of respondents	Percentage
Because of the similarities between L1 and L2	12	38%
Because of those conflicting patterns within the structure of the English language	11	34%
Because of the problem of overgeneralization	06	19%

Because of the teaching process in itself that induces language-related mistakes and errors	03	09%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>

As it is revealed in Table 1, 38% of the sample answered that because of certain coexisting interplays between their L1 and English language, they tended to code-switch. Moreover, 34% of the respondents claimed that the major reason behind resorting to their L1 can be associated with the existence of those conflicting patterns within the structure of English language. As one of the informants wrote, *“while I am speaking English, I do sometimes [make mistakes and commit errors] since I have not thoroughly learned the necessary language structure related to English. It is for this reason that I do refer back to my native language to ensure a [successive continuity] in my talk”*. Then, out of 32 informants, 19% declared that it was the problem of overgeneralization that made them employ specifically their L1. As it was claimed by one of the questioned students who affirmed, *“when I learn a particular rule related to one context, I tend to keep [enlarging] and using this rule thinking that it suits all the contexts. The moment I realize that this rule can no longer be [applicable], I will have no choice, [but resorting] to my L1”*. However, contrary to the researchers’ expectations, 09% of the sample population answered that they were sometimes obliged to shift to their L1 due to the teaching process in itself that induced language-related mistakes and errors. As one of the respondents declared, *“when the teacher herself has limited knowledge of English, we consequently become unable to develop our oral and written performances. Therefore, we tend to make use of our L1 which we master the most”*.

In a similar fashion, Sárosdy et al., (2006) acknowledged that the central linguistic factors that may conceivably create certain language-related nuisances, which may stipulate the manifestations of language-switching in FL classes, may spring from more than one vital source. In this regard, they maintained that factors such as interference, interference, overgeneralization, and teaching-induced errors are the original underlying reasons that stimulate the occurrence of CS in the students’ talk. When extracting these factors, Sárosdy et al. (2006) prioritized both the importance and the role of L1 interference, simply because they deemed it as a chief mechanism whose ineluctability may generate obstacles that decelerate the pace of FL learners’ oral productivity. Such plausible outcomes are in tandem with what was practically obtained from the questionnaire data as "main causes that necessitate employing specifically the students' L1 during the class discussion" (Rios and Campos, 2013).

### 5.2.2 The communicative purposes of CS

Table 4: The main functions offered by CS

<b>The responses</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
To reiterate what was said in another way	16	50%
To hold the floor and continue speaking for a longer period	10	31%
To emphasise what is being communicated	06	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>

In response to this question, the researchers sought to acquire information that might concretely expound the major communicative purposes (functions) for which students shift from the target language (English) to their L1. Half of the sample population, i.e., 50%, declared that the most significant communicative function of CS rests on restating or reiterating what was exactly said in a simple and straightforward manner. Furthermore, 31% of participants expressed their appreciation towards the technique of CS as they consider it as a means that afford them the opportunity to hold the floor and continue speaking for an extended period. Other informants, 19% of the sample, answered that the purpose for which they alternate codes when partaking in their class conversational tasks lies in offering a greater insistence on what they intend to deliver. These key findings report and abide partially by what was established by Elridge (1996) who maintained that students' interactional process can never be detached from CS, with the latter being a very natural and spontaneous speech behavior. As a matter of fact, learners do change codes whilst speaking so that they can, both implicitly and explicitly, hide their language-related weaknesses. More precisely, and according to Elridge's Semantic Model (1996), the functions of learners' CS may entail equivalence, floor-holding, metalanguage, reiteration, group membership, conflict control, and alignment/ misalignment. At this point, it is quite worthy to note the partial consistency of the results obtained from the students' questionnaire data and the meticulous theoretical foundations demarcated by Elridge (1996).

### 5.2.3 CS is a friend and foe

Table 5: The students' evaluation of shifting to their L1.

<b>The responses</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
A productive communicative strategy	17	53%
A detrimental communicative strategy	15	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>

As the study sample qualified the phenomenon of CS as a double-edged sword, the researchers could correspondingly group their standpoints into two contradictory categories, i.e., those who viewed CS as a constructive communication strategy and those who considered it as a rather devastating and unproductive technique since its implementation may handicap the learnability of other languages besides one's L1. More than half of the informants, that is 53%, showed their positive implications towards the technique of CS and, accordingly, called for its integration in EFL classes. This proportion of students qualified CS as a productive communication strategy that facilitates speech and fosters classroom instruction, interaction, and participation. Whereas, contrary to our expectations, 47% of the sample expressed their negative reflections towards the incorporation of CS in language classes. This category of students considered CS as a detrimental strategy that impedes more than it constructs a progressive learning process. For this reason, these students revealed that CS may apparently seem to be productive, but in the depths, it is not as such because it demonstrates a lack of an underlying competence in the target language.

Proponents of CS approve its discernible crucialness in their communication acts and, therefore, insist on its significant incorporation in EFL classes since it offers the opportunity of facilitating their speech and enhancing their reciprocal interactions and involvements in the class. Such a result concurs well with what was theoretically specified by those who upheld the view that the phenomenon of CS can potentially create an abundance of remarkable speaking improvements. What can be deduced from these findings is that the practice of moving back and forth between grammatically different languages has, to a certain extent, the potential of consolidating students' oral performances in L2 learning (Ellis, 1994; Modupeola, 2013; Simasiku, Kasanda and Smit, 2015).

Nevertheless, opponents of CS largely stress its dreadful inaction and dormancy in the sphere of FL teaching and learning owing to the verity that it obstructs the gradual progress of the students' speaking proficiency level. Hence, it can be said that the strategy of CS can, above all, be interpreted as a marker/determinant of a linguistic deficit that may practically leave students with an inadequate background knowledge towards the target language (English) (Eldridge, 1996; Modupeola, 2013; Rather, 2012).

## **5. Conclusions and recommendations**

Unlike other studies whose whole focus of discussion centered around finding better ways to prevent the occurrence of CS in language classes with almost no consideration of what caused it in the first place, this study attempts to figure out the fundamental motive behind the employment of such a conversational device in

pedagogical settings. The findings revealed that the underlying reason for which the majority of the students' code-switch is the linguistic interference that germinates from their L1.

Besides, it was found that through shifting to their L1, students were given the chance to reiterate what they exactly said in another way, hold the floor and continue speaking for a longer period, and have a greater insistence on what is being communicated. Moreover, it was concluded that as a conversational technique, CS could be considered as a productive strategy that may have the advantage of nurturing the students' mutual interaction. Meanwhile, it can be viewed as a detrimental communicative practice that may retard the development of the students' speaking competence.

Inspired by the attained research results and the impressions of the targeted sample regarding the issue of interest, a number of operative substitutes that can possibly lessen the linguistic reasons that prompt the occurrence of CS in EFL classes at Biskra University for both language teachers and learners can be highlighted:

- 1) Adopting more practical methods of teaching that prioritize the use of English language over any other language students can speak is recommended. Towards that end, the instructional process should be based on Communicative Language Learning (CLL) since it gives primacy to producing competent language communicators.
- 2) It would be necessary to plan and organize workshops that attempt to systematically identify the phonological, morphological, syntactical, and semantic disparities and discrepancies between English and Arabic languages in order to help learners minimize the mistakes and errors they make and commit due to their L1 negative transfer.
- 3) After extracting the linguistic convergences and divergences between English language and learners' L1, teachers should, then, shed light on the socio-cultural contrast between these two languages with the intention of promoting learners' cross-cultural and interactional communication.
- 4) Learners should develop the capacity of collocations, employ correct and appropriate words according to the proper context, and improve the fluency together with the accuracy of their expressions.

Despite having answered certain research questions that were rather underestimated, a couple of limitations can be attributed to this study. Firstly, since the qualitative research approach was adopted, generalizing the findings to the whole population of cases was inappropriate as there was only a limited number of participants who partook in this study (Dörnyei, 2007; Creswell, 2014). Secondly, conducting an observation for a period of two weeks was relatively insufficient. In the future, more comprehensive research into the occurrence of the phenomenon of

CS at Biskra University classes should be undertaken, that not only encompasses more participants but also, and most importantly, extends the observation's time span in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the research results (Creswell, 2014).

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