

## The Impact of Code-switching on Vocabulary Learning among Iranian Upper-intermediate EFL Learners

Ehsan Namaziandost<sup>1\*</sup> & Leila Neisi<sup>2</sup> & Reza Banari<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD in TEFL, Department of English, Faculty of Humanities, Shahrekord Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahrekord, Iran

<sup>2</sup>Department of English Language, Faculty of Humanities, Ahvaz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz, Iran

<sup>3</sup>PhD in TEFL, Department of English, Baghmalek Branch, Islamic Azad University, Baghmalek, Iran

**Corresponding Author:** Ehsan Namaziandost, E-mail: e.namazi75@yahoo.com

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the impact of code switching on Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary learning. To this end, 64 participants out of 90 male students were selected and randomly divided into two equal experimental groups- experimental and control groups. Then, the groups were pretested by a vocabulary pre-test. Then after, the participants of experimental group received the treatment, i.e., using code switching. After the treatment ended, both groups took the post-test of vocabulary. The results of paired and independent samples t-tests revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group on the post-test. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the performance of the experimental and the control group on the post-test.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Code switching (CS) is a wonder that happens repetitively in an assortment different language context. Code switching is defined as the use of utilizing learner first language while speaking in the target language. Enthusiasm for CS has incredibly expanded because of the advancement of modern society, expanding globalization, the expanding interconnections among various ethnic populaces, as well as the process of relocation (Akyonve, Zharkynbekova, & Aimoldina, 2012; Tahmasbi, Hashemifardnia, & Namaziandost, 2019). Isfahani and Kiyomarsi (2010) express that CS happens in the discourse of bilingual speakers who can communicate in the two languages with some level of abilities. They additionally believe that it shows the speakers' ethnic personalities. Lehti-Eklund (2013) discovers CS in bilingual networks who communicate in more than one language to interact. She has also demonstrated that CS is utilized by bilinguals when attempting to impart better to express their means. Then and Ting (2009) have remarked on the utilization of CS in multilingual networks. They believe the marvel to be popular, "from day by day life and work environments to classroom" (pg. 1).

(pg. 1). Moreover, numerous researchers stress that the term CS is proper to investigations of bilingualism or multilingualism in which the center is the utilization of at least two languages in discourse context" (Huerta-Macías & Quintero, 1992; Keshmirshakan, Namaziandost, & Pournorouz, 2019).

Franceschini (1996, cited to in Auer, 1998) related CS to changeability of language use which is a general etymological property and to adaptability in behavior which is an extra-phonetic property. Specialists have now agreed that CS is a standard represented conduct regular to roughly 50% of the total populace (Nasri, Namaziandost, & Akbari, 2019) which satisfies an ephemeral conversational or social requirement and marks "that point in the improvement of bilingual students when they are aware of such behavior and select more or less purposefully to utilize it" (Duran, 1994, p. 71). This behavior suggests some level of abilities in the two languages regardless of whether bilingual familiarity is not yet steady and is appeared after the bilingual speaker experiences a two-stage decision making.

In the EFL contexts, a continuous discussion has fixated on whether the target language ought to be utilized as the main mode of training, or students' primary language can assume a corresponding role too (Abedi, Keshmirshakan, & Namaziandost, 2019).

A noteworthy repercussion of the overemphasis during the 1970s and 1980s on students' clear requirement for target language input (Krashen, 1985) prohibited CS as a fundamental necessity for helping students create powerful informative skills of language. As indicated by Simon (2001), CS in foreign language context has been regularly thought of as a training to be maintained a strategic distance from, if not prohibited by any stretch of the imagination, and even those instructors who have felt obliged to switch codes have more often than not felt remorseful of doing as such. She recommends that EFL classroom speaks to a remarkable bilingual setting where the member students know about the educational contract which oversees code decision in various academic circumstances. However, their restricted information of the foreign language may build the likelihood of CS in spite of social and institutional spotlight on the selective utilization of the foreign language by the educators and the students. English language educators who instruct in such settings have ordinarily been worried about decreasing or notwithstanding canceling learners' utilization of the first language in the classroom and augmenting the utilization of the target language to compensate for uncommonness of regular introduction (Nasri, Biria, & Karimi, 2018).

A significant issue in CS studies has fixated on who code-switches, when, where, and for what purposes. Aitchison (1991) has noticed that it is the language students who change codes to look for help, and that teachers' utilization of L1 is limited to answering the students' solicitations. The learners who on experiencing challenges with vocabulary, request the foreign language reciprocals by giving the articulation in the first language, carry on similarly the same number of normal bilinguals in families where the two language are spoken. To put it in other words, CS is a fundamental aspect of the discourse of bilinguals. The native language does not dominate, yet is a vital conversational help. Regardless of whether it was conceivable to expel it from the classroom, it would never be ousted from the learners' brains. Hence, it ought not be viewed if all else fails, however a characteristic alternate route which must be utilized appropriately and methodically, sparingly and unpretentiously (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Rahimi Esfahani, 2018b).

In Iranian EFL context, which is where the researcher works-, learners are taught by both non-native speakers of English. Teachers from different language backgrounds attempt to speak with learners mainly in the target language. However, some

teachers switch to the Persian language since it is the students' first language. In the ELI context, it is vital to pay attention that not all teachers have the equal viewpoints on CS. Some teachers consider CS as impeding learners' utmost ability in learning the target language (Nasri & Biria, 2017). Different instructors do not, accepting that CS may, indeed, bolster learners' second language procurement in various ways. These clashing originations about CS use may influence learners' subsequent language (L2) accomplishment emphatically or contrarily which will be reflected in the speaking accomplishment of learners. The speaking assessment for learners in the ELI is seen as being stressing and onerous. This is because of learners' low familiarity with the English language which is gradually growing particularly in lower levels. Until this point, there is little examine on the effect of CS on L2 vocabulary learning. What concentrates are restricted in extension and range, as far as subjective investigation of this issue (Amorim, 2012; Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Rahimi Esfahani, 2018a). In particular, in the neighborhood extent of Saudi Arabia there isn't much concentrate on this subject applied on Saudi understudies to explore whether CS is a prescribed etymological component in the language classroom or not. More investigations are expected to enable analysts in this field to reach inferences concerning whether CS ought to be actualized as a helpful technique that supports learners' learning and accomplishment or on the off chance that it ought to be restricted from EFL context. Moreover, aside from the issue of the value of CS in the classroom, it is important to measure students' speaking achievement since, "learners must be able to speak fluently if they are to communicate effectively in international English" (Azadi, Biria, & Nasri, 2018; Namaziandost, Abedi, & Nasri, 2019).

The role of students' first language in EFL context, as well as the utilization of translation as a language learning and teaching action, has for quite some time been the subject of much contention and scholarly banter. Initially, translation included as the focal pivot of instructive system in the most punctual techniques for language showing like Grammar Translation Method (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). This action was, further, scrutinized with the appearance of the Direct Method towards the turn of the century. Since that time, variances have been apparent in the mentality toward the utilization of the students' first language in instructional contexts. With the appearance of Communicative Language Teaching approach in the seventies, the utilization of the native language in monolingual settings has been disliked and has energized rather negative mentalities in EFL and ESL instructional method. Such negative

attitude related with L1 use is as yet obvious in current student focused instructive frameworks in which instructional endeavors are made to enable students to create unknown language abilities in a strong informative learning and instructing setting that is portrayed with adequate measure of intelligible contribution to the objective language (Hosseini, Nasri, & Afghari, 2017; Namaziandost, Hashemifardnia, & Shafiee, 2019). Ferrer (2005) has recommended that even students, particularly the further developed ones, appear to dismiss interpretation or turning to their L1 expressly in the language classroom potentially in light of the fact that they are always helped to remember how inadequate and risky it may be as a learning method. Furthermore, interpretation has normally been dealt with either as a content-based order in itself as opposed to as a learning asset at sentential level, or as an evaluative gadget.

In ELT classrooms, code switching comes into use either in the teachers' or the students' discourse. Although it is not favored by many educators, one should have at least an understanding of the functions of switching between the native language and the foreign language and its underlying reasons (Namaziandost, Hashemifardnia, & Shafiee, 2019). Although in recent years, the educating of vocabulary has expected its legitimate spot as a fundamentally significant part of language improvement (Nunan, 1999, p.103), numerous educators would accept that vocabulary learning stems basically from the immediate instructing of words in the classroom. Nonetheless, vocabulary learning should be more extensively based than this (Namaziandost, Hafezian, & Shafiee, 2018). In spite of the fact that to date there has been more research on instructor convictions about first language (L1) use, its capacities and its dissemination in the association than on code switching and its impact on parts of learning, code switching has been the issue which has drawn the consideration of numerous specialists in the field of second language teaching and second language learning for as far back as couple of decades (Namaziandost, Fatahi, & Shafiee, 2019). Most of the teachers know that the goal of testing vocabulary is to assess the subjects' knowledge of lexical items (Farhady, Jafarpur & Birjandi, 1994; Mirshekaran, Namaziandost, & Nazari, 2018.) however, educators in English classes particularly at foundations in Iran don't know about the effect of utilizing code switching on learning vocabulary process before surveying learners' lexical information and they do not know whether instructors' changing to first language might be helpful in passing on messages and explain substance that might be troublesome or risky for students to comprehend them in the foreign

language.. Also, empirical research is still lacking on the Iranian university learners towards the effect of code switching on learning general vocabulary English knowledge (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Sepehri, 2018). Considering the mentioned points, this study aimed to check the probable effects of code switching on learning English vocabulary as general knowledge in an Iranian EFL context.

### 1.1 Research Questions and Null Hypothesis

In line with the above-mentioned objective of the study, the researchers tried to respond the following research question which was motivated by the research gap on the effectiveness of code-switching on vocabulary learning.

**RQ.** Does code-switching have any significant effect on Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary learning?

The following null hypotheses was derived from the research question which are empirically analyzed and tested later in the study:

**H0 1.** Code-switching does not have any significant effect on Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary learning.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Participants

To do this study, 64 Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners were selected among 90 students at a private English Language Institute. Participants' age range was between 16 to 18. They have been studying English as a foreign language for at least six years. Their level of English language proficiency was determined on the basis of their scores on the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). The participants were selected based on convenience sampling method. The learners were randomly divided into two groups of experimental (using code switching (UCS)) (n=32) and control (not using code switching (NUCS)) (n=32). Only males were included in the current study. The first language of all the participants was Persian.

### 2.2 Instruments

In order to accomplish the objective of the present study, the following instruments were employed:

#### 1. Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT):

The first instrument which was utilized in the present study to homogenize the participants was a proficiency test. Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was administrated among 90 students to determine their English language proficiency (i.e., beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-

intermediate, and advanced). Based on the students' performance in this test, those whose scores were between 38 to 48 (out of 60) were considered as the upper-intermediate learners and were selected as the target participants of the control and experimental groups.

**2. Researcher-Made Vocabulary Pre-Test:** The second and the most important instrument for gathering information to answer the question raised in the current study was a researcher-made vocabulary pre-test which was designed based on the students' course book. It included 40 multiple-choice items. In order for the test to be both valid and reliable, it was piloted on a similar group other than the experimental and control groups. This piloting aimed at timing the test and determining item difficulty and item discrimination as well as calculating the reliability of the tests. It was estimated that a period of 40 minutes would supply ample time for the students to take the test. To measure the reliability of the vocabulary pre-test, it was administered to one pilot group. The vocabulary test was piloted on 20 upper-intermediate students similar to experimental and control groups. Kuder-Richardson Reliability Coefficient (K-R 21 Formula) was used to measure the reliability of the test which was 0.898. Moreover, the test was validated by a panel of English experts; they said that since the test measured what it was supposed to measure, it can be claimed that the test was valid.

**3. Researcher-Made Vocabulary Posttest:** The third instrument used in this study was a vocabulary post-test. The modified version of the pre-test was used as the post-test of the study. All characteristics of the post-test were the same as those of the pre-test in terms of type and the number of items. The only difference of this test to the pre-test was that the order of questions and alternatives were changed to avoid the probable recall of the pre-test answers. It was administered to help the researcher measure the effectiveness of the treatment on the students' vocabulary learning. Since the post-test was the same as the pre-test, it was considered both valid and reliable. To be sure, the reliability value of the posttest was also calculated through KR-21 formula as ( $r = 0.961$ ).

### **2.3 Procedures**

In the first step, 90 Iranian EFL learners from a private English language institute were selected. Then, the OQPT test was distributed among them. After answering OQPT test, 64 intermediate students were chosen as the target population of the study. Then, they were randomly divided into two equal experimental groups- UCS and NUCS. They were pre-tested by a researcher-made vocabulary test. Then, the treatment was practiced on both groups. Regarding the treatment, the only difference between the experimental and the control group was related to the use of learners' L1 during different activities. The teacher provided the learners in the experimental group with the opportunity to switch to Farsi while doing different tasks. The learners in the control group were not allowed to use any form of CS. The treatment took 15 sessions of 60 minutes each under the guidance of the supervisor. In the first session, the purposes and procedures of the study were explained to the students and then OQPT was administered. In the second session, the participants of both groups were pre-tested. In the twelve next sessions, the treatment was applied. Then, in the last session, both groups took the researcher-made vocabulary post-test. Finally, the gathered data were analyzed accordingly.

### **2.4 Data Analysis**

In order to answer the research question, data analysis was carried out by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 25. Firstly, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was used in order to check the normality of the data. Secondly, descriptive statistics including means and standard deviation were calculated. Finally, to examine the impacts of the treatment on Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge, a paired samples t-test and an independent samples t-test were run. Paired samples t-test was used to compare the pre and post-tests of each group and independent samples t-test was applied to compare the experimental group's pre and post-tests to the control group's pre and post-tests.

## **3. RESULTS**

Before conducting any analyses on the pretest and posttest, it was necessary to check the normality of the distributions. Thus, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was run on the data obtained from the above-mentioned tests. The results are shown in Table 1:

**Table 1.***Normality Test for the Scores of the Pretest and Post-test*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Exp. Pre	.252	32	.096
Exp. Post	.214	32	.122
Cont. Pre	.214	32	.089
Cont. Post	.162	32	.221

The *p* values under the *Sig.* column in Table 1 determine whether the distributions were normal or not. A *p* value greater than .05 shows a normal distribution, while a *p* value lower than .05 indicates that the distribution has not been normal. Since all the *p* values in Table 1 were larger than .05, it could be concluded that the distributions of scores for the pretest and posttest obtained from EG and CG learners had been normal. It is thus safe to proceed

with parametric test (i.e. Independent and Samples *t* tests in this case) and make further comparisons between the participating groups.

It was stated above that 64 upper intermediate learners were drawn from a larger pool of EFL learners and a pretest was administered. To check the performance of the two groups in pretest, an independent-samples *t* test was run:

**Table 2.***Descriptive Statistics for the Pretest*

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	EG	32	12.9375	.88673	.15675
	CG	32	13.0313	.86077	.15216

Table 2 shows that the EG learners' mean score on the pretest equaled 12.9375 and the CG learners' mean score was 13.0313. To see whether the difference between these two mean scores, and thus the two groups on the pretest, was statistically significant or not, the researcher had to examine the *p*

value under the *Sig.* (2-tailed) column in the *t* test table. In this table, a *p* value less than .05 would indicate a statistically significant difference between the two groups, while a *p* value larger than .05 indicates a difference which failed to reach statistical significance.

**Table 3.***Results of Independent-Samples *t* Test Comparing the Pretest Scores of EG and CG*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Pretest	Equal variances assumed	.648	.424	-.429	62	.669	-.09375	.21846
	Equal variances not assumed			-.429	61.945	.669	-.09375	.21846

Based in the information presented in Table 3., there was not a statistically significant difference in the placement test scores for EG ( $M = 12.9375$ ,  $SD = .88673$ ) and CG ( $M = 13.0313$ ,  $SD = .86077$ ),  $t(64) = -.429$ ,  $p = .669$  (two-tailed). This conclusion was made since the *p* value was larger than the significance level ( $p > .05$ ). Hence, it could be

inferred that the learners in the two groups were at the same level in pretest.

The reason behind administering the posttest was to see whether there was a difference in vocabulary learning of the learners in the experimental groups and those in the control group. To this end, the posttest vocabulary scores of the EG and CG needed

to be compared via an independent samples t test. The descriptive results of the comparison of the two

groups on the posttest are displayed in Tables 4 and 5.

**Table 4.**  
*Descriptive Statistics Results Comparing EG and CG Mean Scores on the Posttest*

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	EG	32	17.1156	.68538	.12116
	CG	32	13.1875	1.09065	.19280

The mean scores of the EG ( $M = 17.1156$ ), and CG ( $M = 13.1875$ ) were different from one another on the posttest. To figure out whether the differences among

these mean scores were significant or not, one needs to check the  $p$  value under the *Sig.* column in the independent samples t test table below (Table 5).

**Table 5.**  
*Results of Independent-Samples t Test Comparing the Posttest Scores of EG and CG*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Pretest	Equal variances assumed	9.499	.003	17.251	62	.000	3.92813	.22771
	Equal variances not assumed			17.251	52.181	.000	3.92813	.22771

As is displayed in Table 5., there was a statistically significant difference in the posttest scores for CG ( $M = 13.1875$ ,  $SD = 1.09065$ ) and EG ( $M = 17.1156$ ,  $SD = .68538$ ) because the  $p$  value under the *Sig.* column was lower than the specified level of significance (i.e.  $.000 < .05$ ), indicating that the two groups did

significantly differ on the posttest. This indicates that the treatment (using code switching) was effective so far as the vocabulary learning of the Iranian upper intermediate EFL learners were concerned. Therefore, it rejects the null hypothesis of the study.

**Table 6.**  
*Paired Samples T-test (Pre and Post-tests of Both Groups)*

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Exp. Post – Exp. Pre	4.17	1.24	.21	19.03	31	.000
Pair 2	Cont. Post – Cont. Pre	.156	.36	.06	2.39	31	.061

In the above table, paired samples t-test is used to compare the pre and post-tests of each group. Since *Sig.* (.000) is less than 0.05, the difference between the pre-test and post-test of the EG is significant. Similarly, since *Sig.* (.061) is higher than 0.05, the difference between the pre-test and post-test of the CG is not significant. It can be concluded that using code switching is effective to be used in the classrooms to improve EFL learners' vocabulary learning.

**4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

After analyzing the data, the results showed that there was not a significant difference among students' performance in pre-test, but in contrast there was a significant difference among the performances of the three groups in the post-test. It could be also observed that students who used code switching got better scores and their performance was better than the control group.

The findings of the current study are not in line with Tian and Macaro (2012) who accept that code

switching is better than the instructor giving L2-just data. Likewise, the consequences of this investigation don't affirm Eldridge (1996) who claims that there is no experimental proof to help the idea that confining native language use would fundamentally improve learning effectiveness, and that most of code-switching in the classroom is profoundly deliberate, and identified with instructive objectives. Appropriately, further, the aftereffects of this investigation on account of utilizing code switching in language classrooms are not perfect with Skiba (1997), who recommends that in the conditions where code switching is utilized because of a failure of articulation, it serves for congruity in discourse as opposed to displaying obstruction in language. In contrary, the discoveries of this research are in accordance with Guo Tao (2009) who expressed that not a wide range of code-switches can be of equivalent help with lessening particular consideration and enhancing the processing. He proceeded with that, some might be less facilitative, even of obstruction to the learning procedure and the issue of expanding/diminishing processing burden might be frustrated by the idea of the accompanying refined sorts of instructor code-switching, for example, the careful or close to correct L1 and L2 proportional, the bypass of L2 lexical things in L1, and the interpretation of L2 meaning of the lexical thing in L1, L2 equivalent words and L2 definition (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost, & Shafiee, 2018).

A comprehension of the elements of switching will furnish language instructors with an elevated consciousness of its utilization in classroom speaking and will clearly prompt better of teaching by either eradicating it or commanding its utilization during the foreign language instruction (Namaziandost, Nasri, Rahimi Esfahani, & Keshmirshakan 2019; Sert, 2005). The teacher code switches to native language in order to clarify meaning, and in this way stresses importance on the foreign language content for effective comprehension. Code-switching can be utilized as a technique to aid illuminate the cognitive load (Macaro 2005; Namaziandost, Nasri, & Rahimi Esfahani, 2019a).

In consistent with the results of prior researches, the finding rising up out of the present enquiry propose that minor avoidance of CS from the language classroom does not really improve the learning process, in any event when language learning is concerned. A positive or negative response to whether switch codes or not can not be offered dependent on a solitary report which has experienced various constraints and delimitations. Indeed, even a speculative response to this inquiry calls for broad experimental research. Intrigued instructors and

specialists who may choose to approach the inquiry all the more carefully may choose to imitate the examination with bigger examples and more gatherings of members at various degrees of capability to consider the plausible connection among CS and students' capability level. It will also be feasible to control, more restrictively, the teaching variable by having the experimental and control classes run by the same teacher. Moreover, inclusion of other language skills and sub-skills can enlarge our comprehension of the very nature of the relationship between CS and learners' attainment in EFL classrooms.

What appears to be obvious is that sound and educated academic choices and decisions regarding objectives, materials, and methodological and evaluative choices can have any kind of effect to the educational results that students accomplish in EFL instructional settings. Such choices should be made as per students' sociocultural foundation. It is trusted that Iranian English language educators at all levels approach this challenge more efficiently to settle on increasingly well-educated choices.

In the present study, the roles and elements of the first language in the foreign language classroom and native language as the primary mode of training were examined. As for all focuses referenced above, it might be proposed that code exchanging in language study hall isn't constantly gainful in learning a language. A few scientists accept that code exchanging might be considered as a helpful procedure in classroom collaboration, if the point is to make meaning obvious and to move the information to understudies in a productive manner (Sert, 2005). The entire educating and learning knowledge are based on language variation, with the crucial thought that the substitute utilization of the two dialects strengthens familiarity with the free, non-fixed connection among items and their names and the essential capacity to separate words and ideas. The discoveries of this examination uncovered the jobs and elements of code-switches in the study hall, and underscored the need to see such procedures in the learning process. Nevertheless, on the micro level, teachers in both situations seem to remain hesitant towards code-switches and old models usually prevail (Namaziandost, Rahimi Esfahani, Nasri, & Mirshekaran, 2018). In spite of the fact that utilizing first language in foreign language classes can be a correspondence technique that enables learners to make up for their insufficiency in the subsequent language, this study proposed that code switching should not be encouraged in language learning.

Like all studies, this study had limitations and could not include all the issues related to the topic. They are as follows:

1. One limitation is that the study included only participants that were 16 to 18 years old. So, the results cannot be generalized to the other age groups.
2. The population was limited to 64 learners. Therefore, this cannot be generalized either.
3. The time allocated to the instruction was so limited.
4. The gender of the participants was limited to the male learners; therefore, the results of the study may not be generalizable to female learners.

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