

A Review of Studies on the Impact of Code-Switching on Second Language Acquisition

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Abstract:

With the development of globalization, the number of second-language and multilingual learners has increased, and the phenomenon of code-switching has become common. As a complex linguistic phenomenon, code-switching is one of the important research topics in sociolinguistics, and it is also of great significance for second language acquisition. Therefore, this paper reviews the impact of code-switching on second language acquisition and its related research and development. It also summarizes the classification, frequency, and causes of code-switching. The results show that appropriate code-switching has a positive impact on second language acquisition, and at the same time, this paper also proposes some countermeasures to improve the problem of inappropriate code-switching in second language acquisition. From the learner's point of view, it is necessary to correctly understand code-switching, its practical significance, and its necessity. However, learners should avoid too much dependence; from the teacher's point of view, it is important to use code-switching in strict accordance with the teaching requirements and, at the same time, use the mother tongue to ensure that students understand; it is also necessary to create a good foreign language learning atmosphere for students and exercise students' foreign language learning ability.

Keywords: Second language acquisition, code-switching, conformity, sociolinguistics

1. Introduction

Sociolinguists often use the neutral term "code" to describe any linguistic item and its variations. Linguistic codes represent languages and dialects and the social and stylistic diversity of the same language.

Code-switching has always been an important topic in sociolinguistics. Code-switching refers to the phenomenon of systematically switching between two or more languages. Dominated by the level of human consciousness, code-switching results from the choice of language variants by language users to satisfy the needs of emotional expression or expression [1]. With the wave of globalization, the deepening of exchanges and cooperation between countries, and the continuous improvement of the education system, the team of second language learners continues to grow, and the phenomenon of code-switching is increasingly common. At the same time, the issue of code-switching in foreign language classrooms has also received much attention recently, and there is a lot of debate in the research on this issue. This article will explore the impact of code-switching on second language acquisition,

such as the help for second language learning, and the disadvantages of second language acquisition, and put forward relevant suggestions.

2. The Process of Code-Switching from Generation to Function

2.1 Categories of Code-Switching

Because linguists have different research angles on code-switching, their definitions of the forms and classifications of code-switching also vary. From the perspective of sociolinguistics or psycholinguistics, Blom&Gumperz first distinguished code-switching as situational switching, which refers to code-switching caused by situational factors such as topic changes and participants, and metaphorical switching, which refers to the code-switching that occurs when changed the tone, focus, or role relationships of a speech [2]. If starting from the language structures of the conversion process, Poplack divided code-switching into intra-sentential switching, inter-sentential switching, and tag switching. Intra-sentential switching refers to the conversion of code between two sentences or clauses, and

inter-sentential switching refers to the code-switching that occurs within clauses or sentences. In contrast, tag switching refers to the insertion of additional components of one language into the sentence of another language [3]. In addition, Auer proposes that, from the communicator's specific language ability and communicative purpose, there is code-switching related to discourse and code-switching related to participants. For example, code-switching that appears in news, advertisements, magazines, literary works, and other discourse belongs to the former one. In contrast, the code-switchings in family gatherings, friend chats, meeting discussions, classroom interactions, and other occasions belong to the latter [4].

2.2 Frequency and Causes of Code-Switching

2.2.1 Frequency of code-switching

A variety of factors influences the frequency of code-switching. Code-switching is influenced by the social environment in which the speaker lives and related to factors such as race, context, age, and the speaker's interpersonal relationships. Brdarević-Čeljo et al. studied the differences in the attitudes of multilingual speakers towards code-switching and code-switching frequency. They found that 391 multilingual from different sociocultural backgrounds had different code-switching frequencies [5]. The results show that multilingual respondents who live abroad or grow up in ethnically and linguistically diverse environments tend to switch codes more frequently, suggesting that environmental factors and cultural background impact the frequency of code-switching. Tulloch et al. conducted a longitudinal study of early code-switching in Spanish-English bilingual children. It has been found that children switch language most frequently when their speaker changes and by the age of 3 or 6 years. The frequency of switching to English is significantly higher than that of switching to Spanish [6]. In the study, it was found that the code-switching of these children was not to make up for the defects of weaker language but to maximize the expression ability, so it can be seen that the communicative purpose of the speaker also affects the frequency of code-switching. Code-Switching and Language Proficiency in Bilingual Children With and Without Developmental Language Disorder (2021) examines the relationship between the frequency of code-switching in Spanish-English children and the language proficiency of each language. Studies have found that bilingual children's proficiency in each language is related to the frequency of code-switching [7]. Becoming more proficient in a language increases the speaker's confidence and the frequency of code-switching. The effect of gender on the frequency of code-switching in Snapchat was studied in the Impact

of Gender on Frequency of Code-switching in Snapchat Advertisements. The study highlights the role of gender in influencing the frequency of code-switching in specific social media contexts [8]. Overall, there are differences in the frequency of code-switching between polylingual and bilingual children, and they are influenced by factors such as language proficiency, dominant position, and gender.

2.2.2 Causes of code-switching

First of all, social rules in communication are one of the causes of code-switching. The speaker's choice of language is influenced by the communicative environment and is conditioned by the social rules in which the environment operates. The social customs and habits in human life and the behaviors most people can accept are social rules. These rules require communicators to use two or more languages in communication because they must obey or deliberately violate social rules to communicate [9]. For example, according to Rina Raiclin et al., because Hebrew is the dominant language in Israel, even if parents continue to use Russian, those children still prefer Hebrew due to social and economic factors, even if they continue to use Russian with the joint efforts of their parents [10]. This illustrates the influence of social environments and rules on language use, which will lead to the use of code-switching by bilinguals. At the same time, it can also reflect the role of the environment in language selection.

The second factor is the object of communication. The relationship between the communicator and the speaker and the group and ethnicity to which the communicator belongs may cause the speaker's code to switch. For example, in the study of Rina Raichlin et al., when a bilingual child who could speak both Hebrew and Russian was asked to tell a Russian story to a Hebrew-speaking audience, the code-switching from Hebrew to Russian occurred more often, in this case mostly in Hebrew, demonstrating the child's sensitivity to the interlocutor [10]. In language learning classrooms, teachers use code-switching as a language teaching tool when teaching students. Despite being well aware of the language policy, teachers continue to use Urdu for code-switching in spoken classrooms due to students' lack of proficiency in English [11]. In other words, in the communication process, the speaker will subconsciously adapt to the identity of the communicator and his actual needs to carry out the corresponding code-switching.

The third point is the psychological motivation of the communicator. Learners' emotional and psychological needs may also contribute to code-switching in SLAs [12]. On the one hand, they can communicate with the communicator via code-switching to narrow the communication

distance and meet their demands. On the other hand, due to foreign language anxiety, they may use their native language to alleviate their foreign language fear when communicating in a second language. Communicators also use code-switching to express their emotions, such as anger, sadness, or happiness.

The last factor is the communicator's language competence. The speaker's language level and language ability also impact the use of code-switching. According to a study by Rintaro Sato at the Japanese National University, the lack of communicative skills in the target language is the most common cause of native language use in the context of EFL. It is the biggest factor influencing the low willingness to use a foreign language [13]. Subjects spoke in Japanese because they could not speak a second language or because they felt that their second language skills were insufficient. In the excerpt, the subject discusses his plans. He initially used English, but due to his lack of vocabulary knowledge and expressive skills in English, he chose to switch to Japanese. It can be seen that the learner's target language level is one of the reasons for the learner's use of code-switching.

2.3 Significance of Code-Switching in SLA

2.3.1 Functionality

During communication, the use of code-switching and the orientation of code selection often alters with various communication objects and situations [14].

One reason is that there are inevitably some gap constraints between two languages, resulting in apparent differences in sentence structures, particularly in cultural diversity [15]. When words with cultural characteristics of one country do not have corresponding ones in the culture of another country, or the explanations are just too lengthy, then code-switching will occur. If the target language is consistently used for interpretation, both parties in communication are more likely to have ambiguity, making the output information hazy.

Another reason is that when using the target language for communication, second language learners may find it difficult to output the target language theory in communication due to a low mastery of the target language or the obscure vocabulary or grammatical structure. Proper use of the mother tongue for auxiliary expression can assist learners in achieving their communicative goals. It is also an effective approach to improve communication efficiency, deepen their understanding of the target language, and promote further learning.

2.3.2 Adaptability

On the one hand, in certain situations, second language learners tend to prioritize using their mother tongue to ex-

press their feelings. For instance, in the second language acquisition classroom, teachers usually pull in the communication distance with students through code-switching to achieve a more harmonious and efficient teaching effect. They will distinguish classroom activities from what they have been taught, using code-switching when introducing them in the classroom, arrange discussion tasks to make students feel closer psychologically, stimulate students' enthusiasm in the classroom, induce students to actively participate in the classroom to grasp the teaching rhythm of the whole class in their own hands [14]. This code-switching conforms to the unstable reality of actual teaching and helps teachers organize classroom activities more efficiently and complete classroom tasks.

On the other hand, code-switching in multi-person communication is an adaptive behavior made by participants according to their communication objects and communication willingness. Influenced by social, cultural, linguistic, cognitive, and other factors, second language learners tend to adapt to the actual context, communicative subjects, self-roles, and language attitudes in the process of second language acquisition because if choosing more appropriate language expressions is more possible to achieve more effective communication [16]. Take contemporary young people as an example; when they face elders or bosses older than themselves, they are more inclined to use respectful and formal language. However, when communicating with their peers, the frequency of their code-switching becomes higher. Furthermore, the efficiency of receiving information from each other is higher as well.

3. The Disadvantages of Code-Switching for Second Language Acquisition

Although code-switching is an effective teaching and communication strategy, it also poses challenges for language learners, especially in terms of language proficiency and language development. First of all, from the perspective of learning psychology, learners may use code-switching in L2 learning because they are not proficient in the target language. It is easy to produce dependence on the mother tongue, which may make the learner prone to anxiety in the target language training that cannot use code-switching. This will probably result in poor training in the target language. At the same time, code-switching due to defects can hurt the willingness to communicate, which is not conducive to enhancing the motivation of L2 learners to practice the target language [13]. In terms of language proficiency, since many students are learning English rather than learning English, the excessive use of code-switching and the use of their mother tongue is worrying, and

the lack of training in the target language will adversely affect their English skills [16]. L2 learning is a process where practice makes perfect. Excessive code-switching in the L2 learning classroom will not enable students to get the component practice of the language they are learning. The student's proficiency and mastery of the target language will not be guaranteed. In addition, the excessive use of code-conversion is not conducive to forming a good foreign language learning environment and cultivating students' good foreign language thinking. Finally, from the perspective of the understanding of the target language, due to the untranslatable nature of the language, the teacher's code-switching in the classroom may cause students to have semantic misunderstanding. They cannot appreciate the subtle differences in the expression of the target language, which can easily lead to the inaccurate expression of learners.

4. Suggestions for Solving the Problem of Code-Switching Usage

According to the analysis of the above issues, it is believed that given the auxiliary nature of code-switching in second-language learning, this phenomenon has a certain universality [17]. Based on this, this article proposes the following suggestions to address the negative impacts of code-switching.

First of all, given the learner's negative willingness to communicate, learners should treat the reality of code-switching with an open and inclusive attitude, not only to understand its necessity but also to realize the importance and practicability of this phenomenon in the process of learning a foreign language, especially in the early stage, and additionally to realize that frequent and blind code-switching does not affect improving the second language level. Facilitating learners' understanding, saving time, and improving learning efficiency are prerequisites for code-switching.

Secondly, aimed at the problem of excessive use of code-switching, educators should use code-switching in a timely and appropriate manner and consciously switch the code to help learners understand the target language and improve their learning efficiency to ensure that the target language output is sufficient. The level is slightly higher than the current level of learners, consciously switching codes can help learners understand the target language and improve learning efficiency.

Thirdly, given the possible semantic misunderstanding, it is necessary to start with personal ability, which requires educators to improve their professional ability and expand the depth and breadth of their first and second languages, that is, to deepen the mastery of their existing and target

languages.

5. Conclusion

In brief, the majority of prior research has applied that in the past four years, domestic and foreign scholars have no longer limited their research to theoretical explanations and linguistic studies on code-switching itself but have begun to develop toward the practical application of code-switching in social life and have made certain achievements. This article explores the impact of code-switching on second language acquisition, summarizing its great significance while also paying attention to the drawbacks of code-switching for second language learners, such as reducing communication willingness, creating a lack of learning environment, and generating semantic misunderstandings. Withal, learners should have a correct understanding of code-switching, and educators should improve their teaching level and utilize the advantages of code-switching in teaching. Nonetheless, apart from these three perspectives of fundamental thinking, application methods, and personal abilities, it is hoped that in the future, more comprehensive solutions to code-switching problems can be found so that code-switching can play a full role in second language acquisition.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contribute equally, and their names are listed alphabetically.

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