

Albaha University Students' Attitudes towards Code-switching in Formal Setting

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating Albaha University students' attitudes towards code switching in classroom setting. To fulfill the task, thirty students at Faculty of Sciences and Arts -English Department -Almandaq were chosen as a sample of this study. Moreover, seven teachers were consulted to express their own point of views and explain their experiences in code switching inside the classroom. The study adopts the quantitative method. Direct observations, and questionnaires for both the students and the teachers were employed to collect the data for this study. The outcome of this study shows remarkable satisfaction from the students as well as the teachers in employing code switching as a strategy to facilitate learning and teaching process and understanding the target language clearly.

Keywords: Albaha university students, code-switching, formal setting.

Introduction

Code Switching (CS) is shifting from one language to another in a conversation. It is common in every day practice among people in the world for so many reasons and usually occur in an unconscious activity. This switching process can be for the whole sentence or just words. Numan and Carter (2001) briefly define the term as a phenomenon of switching from one language to another in the same discourse.

Richard Skiba (1997) states that code switching may be viewed as an extension to language for bilingual speakers rather than an interference and from other perspectives it may be viewed as interference. Julianne E. Hammink (2000) comments that code switching is often viewed negatively. It is often considered a low prestige form, incorrect, poor language, or a result of incomplete mastery of the two languages.

Saudi people, especially the university students, often insert English words/phrases in their speech. This may happen spontaneously or intentionally as one of the requirements of modernization and globalization. Moreover, the technology and media also hasten this kind of new habit. However, others code switched because of academic reason. Code switching between English and Arabic can be a bridge toward the fluency in English. For the teachers, code switching can be a useful tool in transforming knowledge to the students.

In fact, the situation is still a grey area and debatable issue for linguists and scholars, whether English should be taught entirely in English or in both languages. Some linguists such as Jeremy Harmer (1983) attacks firmly code-switching and using the mother tongue in English classes, while others such as David Atkinson (1987) and John Harbord (1992) appreciate highly the process of code-switching in learning and teaching.

The official language here in Saudi Arabia is Arabic. So, people here generally switch between Arabic and English. However, people who use different languages beside their mother tongue can switch from one language to another during interaction creating a phenomenon called code-switching. (Legonhausen, 1991) sees that learners' code switching had not been studied in the 1970s-1980s because learners were never allowed to code switch freely.

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Code switching is generally defined as a nonstandard use of L2 within an L1 situation by bilinguals or even those who speak two or more languages in the same conversation (Muysken, 1995). According to Clyne (1987) code switching is a change by a speaker from one language or language variety to another one. Jacks C. Richard and Rhichard Schmidt (2002) describe code switching when a speaker makes a change from one language to another language. This change can occur when one speaker uses a language during a conversation, and the other speaker replies in a different language; or when a speaker starts his conversation in a language, then changes it to another language in the middle of his speech.

(Lipski, 1985) lists three different types of code switching. The first type of language switching is called mechanical switching, which appears unintentionally. The second type is known as code mixing. Code mixing happens when the speaker cannot remember an expression, but can recall it in a different language. The third type, known as code changing, which is altering focus from one language to another.

Researchers focused on the way code-switching related to the interaction between teachers and learners in a bilingual classroom. The monolingual classroom was also studied and has shown that teachers and students use code switching when interacting with each other in educational context (Cipriani, 2001 and Macaro, 2001).

Objectives of the Study

This study mainly tries to find out Albaha university students' attitudes towards code switching in formal setting. To give a complete picture, related areas are also investigated. So, the study attempts to:

- a) Investigate the attitudes of Albaha university students' towards teachers' code switching.
- b) Present the different types of code switching.
- c) Examine the frequency switching of the teachers/ students.
- d) Introduce the advantages / disadvantages of code switching.
- e) Explore the factors influencing teachers' switching to the mother tongue.
- f) Present the functions of teachers' switching to the L1 in practice.

Materials and methods

Participants

The participants in this study were both teachers and students. Five teachers and thirty students. The teachers as well as the students were chosen randomly as a sample of this study and they are from Faculty of Sciences and Arts -English Department –Almandaq. This study was conducted in 2018.

Data collecting Tools

To collect reliable data, the following instruments were employed in this study:

a) Teachers' Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to address teachers, and it was used for collecting quantitative data to the study. It was allocated to examine the frequency of switching to Arabic in English classes, the attitudes of the teachers' code switching to Arabic, and the views on the functions, factors and influence of teachers' code-switching to Arabic. To ensure the reliability and validity of the survey, the questionnaire was piloted by expert teachers in the field. The questionnaire was revised in some aspects, including the addition or deletion of some items and the way to express a certain idea.

b) Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire directed to the students, and it was used to find out the attitudes of the students of using code switching during the classroom by the teachers as well as by the students.

c) Direct Observations

Fifty minutes of eight lectures of the teachers were observed and documented for further analysis. Furthermore, many hours were allocated to record teachers' linguistic behaviour and the students' reaction towards code switching during the lectures. The observations were run by the researcher himself and by the assistance of other colleagues in the same field.

Discussion

Code switching is a broadly observed phenomenon especially in bilingual or multilingual communities, from single-family units to large social groups. Code switching refers to the interchanging of two languages together while speaking (Bloomberg, 2004). According to Gumperz (1982), code switching refers to “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” (p.59).

Types of Codeswitching

Providing a classification framework to account the phenomenon of code switching is still a debatable issue. On one hand, Eldin (2014) claim that there are two types of code switching: situational and metaphorical. On the other hand, Poplack (1980) suggests a framework that categorizes three different types of switching as follow:

a) Tag-Switching

This type includes inserting a tag or short phrase in one language into another language. (Hamers & Blanc, 2000) claim that this type of code switching occurs habitually because it contains minimal syntactic restrictions; therefore, they do not break syntactic rules when inserted into a sentence that is given in the L1. Tags include interjections, fillers and idiomatic expressions. Examples of common English tags are “you know”, “I mean”, “look” and “right”.

b) Inter-Sentential Switching

This type shows switching at sentential boundaries where one clause or sentence is in one language and the next clause or sentence is in the other. Eldin (2014) and MacSwan (1999) state that since it takes place within the same sentence, it requires fluency in both languages and the speaker is able to follow the rules of the two languages.

c) Intra-Sentential Switching

According to Poplack (1980), intra-sentential switching is the most complex type of code switching because it can happen at clausal, sentential or even word level. An example of this type is that given by Poplack as the title of one of her papers: e.g. sometimes I'll Start a Sentence in English and finish it in Spanish (Cakrawarti, 2011).

Code switching in classroom setting

Code-switching can be used as an actual teaching method. When the teacher is conscious of the language of the students, the classroom is a setting that possibly uses code switching. Code-switching is necessary in the classroom if the teacher and students share the same linguistic background and can be considered as a natural part of teaching behaviour.

Bilingual teachers commonly use two languages in teaching process. They switch between the mother tongue and the target language in three ways: (a) spontaneously, (b) directly and (c) intentionally. (Cook, 2001) thinks that teachers can evaluate the situation then determine when the mother tongue should be used and when switching to target language is suitable to enable comprehension and meaningful involvement of the students. On the other hand, (Tikunoff, 1985) believes that teachers are unaware of the fact that they are switching; switches are made unconsciously. Radolpho Jacobson (1981) proposed a model which integrates the use of code-switching in the teaching of bilingual courses and addresses the following issues:

- (1) The extent to which the learner's native language must be developed for success in learning a second language.
- (2) The extent to which the home language should be used in classroom.
- (3) The extent to which first language maintenance in the primary grades would not interfere with the transition to English in post primary education.
- (4) The extent to which the use of both languages would lead to an understanding of the bilingual functioning of some sectors of our society.
- (5) The extent to which school subject could be learned through two languages.

Cook (2002) believes that the application of code switching in classes which do not share the same native language may create problems, as some of the students (though few in number) will somehow be neglected. So, it may be suggested that the students should share the same native language, if code switching will be applied in instruction. Another point to consider in this respect is that the competence of the teacher in mother tongue of students also plays a vital role, if positive contributions of code switching are expected.

Skiba (1997) demonstrates that in the conditions where code switching is used due to incapability of expression, it helps for steadiness in speech instead of presenting interference in language. Here, code switching stands to be a supporting element in communication; therefore helps for communicative purposes as it is used as a tool for transference of meaning. Moreover, the roles of the teacher's code switching as supportive explanations. These supportive points lead to the idea that the use of code switching builds a bridge of knowledge and regarded as an important element in language teaching.

Why do teachers code switch?

Teachers may switch between the mother tongue and the target language consciously and intentionally. On the other hand, in some cases it may occur unconsciously. Mattson and Burenhult (1999) investigated into the purposes that force the teachers to switch and suggest three functions as follow:

a) Topic switch

The teacher here switch according to the topic that is under discussion. Cole (1998) suggested that a teacher can exploit students' previous L1 learning experience to increase their understanding of L2. This is common in teaching grammar, that the teacher switch his language to the mother tongue of his students in dealing with particular grammar points. In these cases, the students' attention is directed to the new knowledge by making use of code switching and accordingly making use of native tongue.

b) Affective functions

The main focus here is the expression of emotions. The teacher adopts code switching to build solidarity and intimate relations with the students. Here, one may switch for making a supportive language environment in the classroom.

c) Repetitive function

The teacher employs code switching as a technique to transfer the necessary knowledge for the students to clarify meaning. This may generate a problem. Repeat the instruction in native language may cause negative student behaviours. When the students understand that the instruction in the target language will be translate into the native language, the students may neglect listening to the instruction in the foreign language.

Why do students code switch?

Code switching as general is a natural linguistic behaviour in bilingual societies, so it is expected to be clear among students. Eldridge (1996) thinks that students switch between their mother tongue and the foreign language unconsciously and lists four reasons that stand behind the students' code switching.

a) Equivalence

The student use the native equivalent of a certain word item in the target language and switch to their native tongue. This method may be related to the lack of linguistic ability of target language. So "equivalence" functions as a tool for students as to continue communication.

b) Floor-holding

The students employ this process as a result of deficiency in fluency of the target language. It takes place during a conversation in the target language where the students tend to fill the gap with native language. However, floor holding mechanism has a negative effects on learning a foreign language; since it may result in loss of fluency in long term.

c) Reiteration

Eldridge (1996) defines reiteration as "messages are reinforced, emphasized, or clarified where the message has already been transmitted in one code, but not understood" (p:306). So, the message in the target language is repeated by the student in native tongue and tries to give the meaning by repetition. The students restore to this technique due to failure of conveying the meaning exactly in target language or inform the teacher that the content is clearly understood.

d) Conflict control

The students tend to adopt this technique when they tend to avoid a misunderstanding, tend to utter words indirectly or in so many cases for the lack of some culturally equivalent language between the native language and target language. The tendency to employ this type of code switching may vary according to students' needs.

Data analysis

After collecting the data according to the above methodology, the analysis of data was run as follow:

Table (1):Teachers' Questionnaire

No	Statement	Degrees of switching to Arabic					Total
		SA	A	N	DA	SD	
		No. & (%)	No. & (%)	No. & (%)	No. & (%)	No. & (%)	
1-	Code switching facilitates the language learning process.	1 (14.28)	5 (71.42%)	1 (14.28)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
2-	Code switching can be a final option when all other choices have been employed.	6 (85.71%)	1 (14.28)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
3-	Code switching is an efficient, timesaving technique.	0 (0%)	5 (71.42%)	1 (14.28)	1 (14.28)	0 (0%)	100%
4-	I switch to Arabic in EFL classes to explain meaning of words and sentences.	2 (28.57)	4 (57.14%)	1 (14.28)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
5-	I resort to code switching to explain difficult concepts.	5 (71.42%)	2 (28.57)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
6-	I tend to switch to explain grammar clearly.	0 (0%)	6 (85.71%)	1 (14.28)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
7-	I employ code switching to check for comprehension.	0 (0%)	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
8-	Code switching is useful to manage the classroom tasks.	1 (14.28)	5 (71.42%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (14.28)	100%
9-	Code switching is a tool to encourage students' participation in classroom activities.	0 (0%)	6 (85.71%)	1 (14.28)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
10-	Code switching is useful to reduce students' anxiety in learning English.	5 (71.42%)	1 (14.28)	1 (14.28)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%

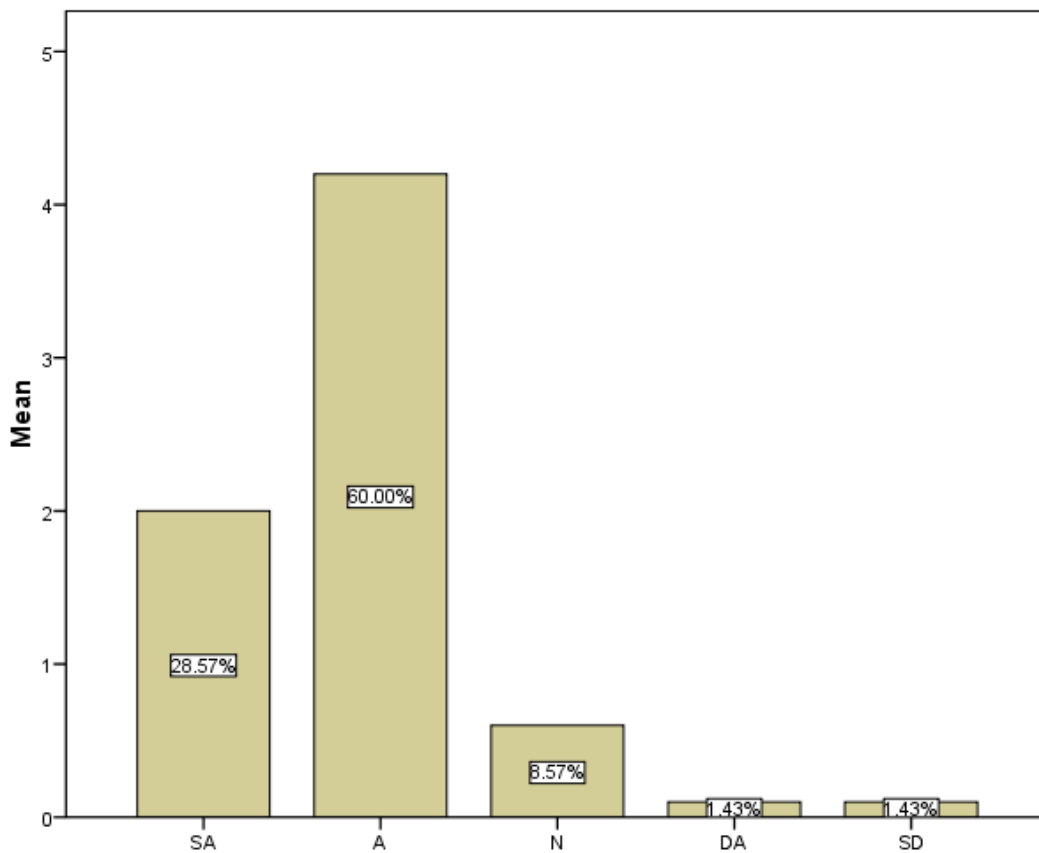
* SA = Strongly Agree

* A = Agree

* N = Neutral

* DA = Disagree

* SD = Strongly Disagree



	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
SA	10	6	0	6	20	2.00	2.404	5.778
A	10	6	1	7	42	4.20	2.150	4.622
N	10	1	0	1	6	.60	.516	.267
DA	10	1	0	1	1	.10	.316	.100
SD	10	1	0	1	1	.10	.316	.100
Valid N (listwise)	10							

Table (1) shows the teachers point of view towards employing code switching. About 85% of the teachers see that code switching facilitates language learning and encourages students' participation in classroom activities. Nearly 71% of them believe that employing code switching can save time and effort. The majority of the teachers consider using code switching in explaining difficult concept, grammar and reducing students' anxiety in learning English. Generally, the teachers show positive attitudes towards adopting this technique in teaching process as well as learning one. In so many cases, code switching can be the final and the suitable option for teachers to engage the students into the classroom activities.

Regarding the descriptive statistics of the teachers' responses focusing mainly on the mean, it appears that the mean of the positive responses (strongly agree 2.00 and agree 4.20) which indicates that the teachers are well-convinced of code switching and its value in teaching and learning processes. On the other hand, the mean of the negative responses were unconsidered (disagree 1.00 and strongly disagree 1.00) which reveals that fewer teachers think negatively of code switching.

Table (2): Students' Questionnaire

No.	statements	Frequency of switching to Arabic				Total
		Always	sometimes	Rarely	never	
1-	I switch to Arabic in EFL class	13.33%	60%	16.66%	10%	100%
2-	Teacher switch to Arabic in EFL classroom	26.66%	53.33%	20.%	0	100%
3-	I prefer my teacher using Arabic in the EFL classroom	33.33%	56.66%	10%	0	100%
4-	I am conscious of teachers' code switching to Arabic in the EFL class.	30%	40%	16.66%	13.33%	100%
No	statement	managing class	explain grammar	explain vocab.	check comprehension	Total
5-	Teacher switch to Arabic in EFL class	10%	30%	46.66%	13.33%	100%
	Statement	Extremely beneficial	Beneficial	no impact	Harmful	total
6-	Using Arabic in EFL class	46.66%	30%	16.66%	6.66%	100%

Table (2) reveals the attitudes of the students towards using code switching. The students are so optimistic towards switching from English to Arabic. About 73% of the students switch to Arabic and they see that 80% of the teachers switch to Arabic in the classroom. Almost 90% of the students express preference and pleasure when their teachers switch to Arabic in classroom. The majority of the students (46.66%) think that teachers switch to explain vocabulary. About a fifth of the students believe that the teachers switch to manage the class. Finally, almost 77% of the students show positive attitude towards code switching and they think that switching to Arabic in the class is beneficial and supportive.

Table (3): Checklist Observation

N o	Checklist Items	Always	Usually	Often	sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
1-	Teaching process							
	Explaining meaning of words	4 (13.3%)	12 (40%)	8 (26.6%)	6 (20.%)	0	0	30 (100%)
	Checking comprehension	6 (20.%)	8 (26.6%)	5 (16.6%)	3 (10%)	6 (20.%)	2 (6.6%)	30 (100%)
	Motivating students	13 (43.3%)	9 (30%)	5 (16.6%)	3 (10%)	0	0	30 (100%)
	Giving feedback	7 (23.3%)	7 (23.3%)	8 (26.6%)	3 (10%)	2 (6.6%)	3 (10%)	30 (100%)
	Explaining grammar clearly	9 (30%)	7 (23.3%)	6 (20.%)	5 (16.6%)	2 (6.6%)	1 (3.3%)	30 (100%)
	Reducing students' anxiety	5 (16.6%)	8 (26.6%)	6 (20.%)	7 (23.3%)	4 (13.3%)	0	30 (100%)
2-	Managing the class							
	Giving instructions	8 (26.6%)	6 (20.%)	9 (30%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	1 (3.3%)	30 (100%)
	Planning activities	10 (33.3%)	5 (16.6%)	6 (20.%)	5 (16.6%)	2 (6.6%)	2 (6.6%)	30 (100%)
	Giving lesson objectives	8 (26.6%)	8 (26.6%)	4 (13.3%)	4 (13.3%)	4 (13.3%)	2 (6.6%)	30 (100%)
	Dealing with classroom equipment	9 (30%)	6 (20.%)	6 (20.%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	30 (100%)
3-	Teachers state of mind							
	Stressed	2 (6.6%)	4 (13.3%)	4 (13.3%)	4 (13.3%)	8 (26.6%)	8 (26.6%)	30 (100%)
	Full of emotion	8 (26.6%)	7 (23.3%)	7 (23.3%)	5 (16.6%)	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.6%)	30 (100%)
	Joking	11 (36.6%)	9 (30%)	5 (16.6%)	2 (6.6%)	2 (6.6%)	1 (3.3%)	30 (100%)
(checklistobservation) Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.	Skewness		

	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Deviation	Statistic	Std. Error
always	16	0	13	6.19	3.953	-.240	.564
usually	16	0	12	5.75	3.474	-.436	.564
often	16	0	9	4.94	2.816	-.767	.564
sometimes	16	0	7	3.31	2.089	-.224	.564
rarely	16	0	8	2.75	2.620	.997	.564
never	16	0	8	2.50	2.338	.733	.564
Valid N (listwise)	16						

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.816	.827	6

Table (3) illustrates the checklist observation results. The test reliability was computed to measure the consistency between enter items. Alpha Cornbach value was (0.827) which means it is good and suggests that the test is reliable statistically.

The processes of observation show the positive attitudes of the teachers as well as the students towards code switching. On one hand, the mean of the positive observations reveal that there is a general satisfaction of employing code switching in teaching process and managing the classroom e.g (always 6.19), (usually 5.75), (often 4.94) and (sometimes 3.31). On the other hand, the mean of the negative observations (rarely 2.75) and (never 2.50) which is considered to be slight comparing to the mean of the positive observations. Regarding the teachers' state of mind, almost 90% of the observations emphasize that the teachers are full of emotion and joking while they are switching. About 53% from the observations claim that the teachers are not stress while switching, whereas nearly 47% of the observations assert the opposite.

Conclusion

From the analyzed data, adopting code switching in formal setting becomes crucial needs in educational process. English teachers as well as the students show satisfactions towards employing code switching in teaching process. Almost the majority of the teachers and the students at Albaha University see that switching between the target language and the mother tongue in classroom facilitates learning procedure.

On one hand, the teachers claim that they switch for didactic purposes such as explaining new words and grammar, managing the class, engaging the students into classroom activities and reducing foreign language anxiety. On the other hand, the students welcome employing code switching in classroom as an effective technique in learning.

Observation checklist is conducted to investigate the linguistic behaviour of the teachers in the classroom and the reaction of the students towards this behaviour (code switching). The observation shows that the teachers switch to help the students overcome learning difficulties that they encounter in classroom. The students feel free to display their satisfaction and happiness of this method.

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Appendix 1

Teachers' Questionnaire

No	Statement	Degrees of switching to Arabic					Total
		SA	A	N	DA	SD	
		No. & (%)	No. & (%)	No. & (%)	No. & (%)	No. & (%)	
1-	Code switching facilitates the language learning process.						
2-	Code switching can be a final option when all other choices have been employed.						
3-	Code switching is an efficient, time-saving technique.						
4-	I switch to Arabic in EFL classes to explain meaning of words and sentences.						
5-	I resort to code switching to explain difficult concepts.						
6-	I tend to switch to explain grammar clearly.						
7-	I employ code switching to check for comprehension.						
8-	Code switching is useful to manage the classroom tasks.						
9-	Code switching is a tool to encourage students' participation in classroom activities.						
10-	Code switching is useful to reduce students' anxiety in learning English.						

* SA = Strongly Agree

* A = Agree

* N = Neutral

* DA = Disagree

* SD = Strongly Disagree

Appendix 2

Students' Questionnaire

Draw a circle round the best answer that describes your state

1) I switch to Arabic in EFL class

- 1. Always
- 2. Sometimes
- 3. Rarely
- 4. Never

2) Using Arabic on learning English in class is

- 1-Extremely beneficial
- 2.Beneficial
- 3.No impact
- 4.Harmful

3) My English teachers switch to Arabic in EFL classroom

- 1. Always
- 2.Sometimes
- 3.Rarely
- 4.Never

4) My teachers switch to Arabic in EFL class mainly to

- 1. Manage class
- 2. Explain grammar rules
- 3. Explain new vocabulary items
- 4. Check comprehension

5) I prefer my teacher to use Arabic in the EFL classroom

- 1. Always
- 2. Sometimes
- 3. Rarely
- 4. Never

6) I'mconscious of teachers' code switching to Arabic in the EFL class.

- A. always.
- B. sometimes.
- C. rarely.
- D. never

Appendix 3

Checklist Observation

No.	Checklist Items	Always	Usually	Oftens	sometime	Rarely	Never
1-	Teaching process						
	Explaining meaning of words						
	Checking comprehension						
	Motivating students						
	Giving feedback						
	Explaining grammar clearly						
	Reducing students' anxiety						
2-	Managing the class						
	Giving instructions						
	Planning activities						
	Giving lesson objectives						
	Dealing with classroom equipment						
3-	Teachers state of mind						
	Stressed						
	Full of emotion						
	Joking						