# Teacher's and learners' use of code switching in the English as a foreign language classroom: a qualitative study

Saionara GREGGIO
Gloria GIL
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

**Abstract:** *Since the 1990s, researchers have examined several issues related to teachers' and learners' use of the foreign language and the mother tongue (code switching) in the foreign language classroom. Both earlier and recent research on this issue show that the mother tongue may have important functions in the foreign language classroom. The main objective of this article is to show the results of a qualitative study which investigated the use of English and Portuguese in interactive exchanges between the teacher and the learners in both a beginner and a pre-intermediate English as a Foreign Language classroom. A total of twelve classes were observed, audio-recorded and analyzed in each group. The results of this study suggest that code switching in teacher-learner interaction may have an important role in facilitating interaction among classroom participants as well as in facilitating foreign language learning.*

**Key-words:** *code switching; functions; the foreign language classroom.*

INTRODUCTION

Studies carried out in Brazilian and in other educational contexts around the world have shown that teachers and learners make use of code switching[1] when communicating and interacting in the foreign language (FL) classroom (Antón and Dicamilla, 1999; Flyman-Mattsson and Burenhult, 1999; Braga, 2000; Cipriani, 2001; Macaro, 2001; Martinez, 2001; Moreira, 2001; Bergsleithner, 2002; Turnbull, 2002; Arnfast and Jorgensen, 2003, Melo, 2005). In this article, we will report a qualitative study which aimed at investigating the use of

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[1] Code switching is commonly defined as the alternating use of, at least, two codes in the same conversational event (Downs, 1984).

code switching[2] in teacher-learner(s) interaction in two EFL classrooms, one for beginners and one for pre-intermediate learners. More specifically, this study has investigated: a) whether the teachers and the learners use code switching in the EFL classroom or not; b) the types of code switching they use; c) the moments when there is frequent use of code switching; and d) the functions of code switching.

CODE SWITCHING IN SECOND/FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION/ LEARNING

Code switching in the area of second/foreign language acquisition/learning (SLA/FLA/SLL/FLL) was first seen as a linguistic behavior of developing bilinguals in bilingual or multilingual settings. Early studies on this issue were carried out in bilingual contexts in the United States, with the objective of investigating primarily the functions of code switching in the speech of bilingual teachers and the frequency with which some languages, usually English or Spanish, were employed to perform different functions (Martin-Jones, 1995). In the mid 1990's, researchers started focusing on the way code switching may contribute to the interactional work that teachers and learners do in bilingual classrooms. Since then researchers have examined several issues related to teachers' and learners' use of code switching in bilingual or multilingual educational contexts around the world.

Recent studies carried out in monolingual foreign language classrooms, however, have also shown that teachers and students make use of code switching when interacting with each other in this type of educational context (Antón and Dicamilla, 1999; Flyman-Mattsson and Burenhult, 1999; Braga, 2000; Cipriani, 2001; Macaro, 2001; Moreira, 2001;

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[2]  In this study, code switching refers to each time the teacher or the learners switch the code of communication, that is, when they switch from English to Portuguese or Portuguese to English when speaking in the classroom.

Bergsleithner, 2002). Braga (ibid.), Cipriani (ibid), and Bergsleithner (ibid.), for example, investigating aspects such as humor, participation strategies, and grammar instruction in EFL classes in educational contexts in Brazil, observed that in beginner as well as in intermediate levels, participants did use code switching in class.

Braga (2000), in her study on humor in a beginner EFL classroom, found out that code switching was used by participants as a strategy that signals humorous situations when correcting activities, that is, code switching contributed to creating a more relaxed atmosphere in the EFL classroom being investigated.

Cipriani (2001), investigating oral participation strategies in a beginner group, observed that code switching was one of the strategies that fostered oral participation among the teacher and learners. She also found out that the teacher made use of code switching to clarify vocabulary, communicate tasks and to encourage learners to speak in English. The learners, on the other hand, used code switching as an oral strategy which enabled them to carry on speaking in English.

Bergsleithner (2002), in her study on grammar and interaction in a pre-intermediate EFL classroom, observed that the learners used code switching to better express themselves when interacting with the teacher and when negotiating form and meaning. She also found out that, in some moments, code switching arose from the need for a greater understandability of the grammar topics.

As this brief review of literature suggests, code switching may also have important functions in the interactive work that teachers and learners do in the foreign language classroom in monolingual contexts. Therefore, the present study describes and illustrates the use of code switching in interactive exchanges between the teacher and the learners in two EFL classrooms.

METHODOLOGY

*Context, participants, and data collection*

The present study draws on data collected in English 2, a beginner group, and in English 5, a pre-intermediate group. Both groups were regularly enrolled at the Extracurricular English Course which is offered by the Foreign Language Department at a Federal University in Brazil.

The data collection followed a qualitative perspective (Allwright and Bailey, 1991; Erickson, 1986), which means that data were collected as naturally occurring. The data collection comprised the following different techniques: classroom observation, informal talks with participants, field notes, and audio recordings. A total of twelve hours of classes were observed and audio recorded in each group. The data recorded were transcribed and used for analysis.

*Data analysis*

The following four questions were addressed in the data analysis: 1) whether the teachers and the learners use code switching in the EFL classroom or not; 2) the types of code switching they use; 3) the moments when there is frequent use of code switching; and 4) the functions of code switching. The data analysis also followed a qualitative perspective, that is, the selected data were analyzed, described and interpreted.

The data transcribed were first classified into the following moments: before starting the classes, beginning of the classes, warm up-review, warm up-new topic, grammar explanations, giving instructions, receiving instructions, doing activities, monitoring/assisting the learners, requesting for assistance, and correcting activities. Then, as we had previously noticed during data collection that in some moments there seemed to be more code switching than in

others, we developed a procedure to check the actual use of code switching by participants, and consequently, the moments in which it was more frequent. Once we had identified the moments when there was a frequent use of code switching in teacher-learner(s) interaction in each group, we could start analyzing the functions of code switching that appeared more frequently in the speech of the participants in those moments.

The analysis of the functions of code switching was divided into two parts. In the first part, we analyzed the functions that appeared more frequently in the speech of the two teachers. In the second part, we analyzed the functions of code switching that appeared more frequently in the speech of the learners of both groups. All the functions that appeared more frequently in teacher-learner(s) interaction were then described and illustrated with examples selected from the transcriptions. The results of the analysis will be presented next.

RESULTS

Through classroom observation and transcription analysis, it could be seen that all learners of the two groups as well as the two teachers made use of code switching in class. It could also be seen that the use of code switching was minimum in certain moments, which means that participants switched into the other code uttering a word or a sentence, and extensive[3] in other moments, which means that participants switched into the other code uttering more than a sentence.

The analysis of the transcriptions has also shown that the use of code switching by the teachers and by the learners was more frequent in some moments. In the beginner group, the teacher made use of code switching especially in four

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[3]   The terms minimum and extensive were not preestablished, but emerged from the data analysis.

moments: a) when explaining grammar; b) giving instructions; c) monitoring/assisting the students; and d) when correcting activities. The use of code switching from L2 to L1[4] by the beginner group teacher in these moments usually arose from her need to clarify words, expressions, structures and rules of the L2, and to make sure the learners understood her utterances. The beginner group learners also resorted to code switching in some moments: a) during grammar explanations; b) when receiving instructions; c) when requesting for assistance; and d) when correcting activities. The use of code switching from L2 to L1 by the learners in these moments usually arose from their need to communicate, interact and participate in class.

In the pre-intermediate group, the teacher was observed to use little code switching in his classes. He resorted to the use of L2 and L1 especially in two moments: a) when explaining grammar, and b) when correcting activities. The teacher's use of code switching in these moments was also observed to arise from his need to clarify understanding of structures and rules of the L2. The pre-intermediate group learners were also observed to resort to code switching from L2 to L1 during grammar explanations, and correction of activities. As with the beginner group, the learners' code switching in these moments was observed to arise from their need to communicate and participate in class as well as to clarify understanding of the topics under study.

A summary of the analysis of teachers' and learners' use of code switching in the two investigated EFL groups is presented in Table 1.

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[4]    In this study L1 refers to Portuguese and L2 refers to English.

|  | Beginner group | | Pre-intermediate group | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | teacher | learners | teacher | learners |
| Before starting the classes | L1 | L1 | L2 | L1 and L2 |
| Beginning of the classes | Minimum (L1→L2) | L1 | L2 | Minimum (L1→L2) |
| Warm up-review | Minimum (L2→L1) | Minimum (L2→L1) | L2 | L2 |
| Warm up-new topic | Extensive (L2→L1) | Minimum (L2→L1) | L2 | L2 |
| Grammar explanations (L2→L1) | Extensive (L2→L1) | Extensive (L2→L1) | Minimum | Minimum (L2→L1) |
| Giving instructions | Extensive (L2→L1) |  | L2 |  |
| Receiving instructions (L2→L1) |  | Extensive | (L2→L1) | Minimum |
| Requesting for assistance (L2→L1) |  | Extensive | (L2→L1) | Minimum |
| Monitoring/assisting the learners | Extensive (L2→L1) |  | L2 |  |
| Correcting activities | Extensive (L2→L1) | Extensive (L2→L1) | Minimum (L2→L1) | Minimum (L2→L1) |

Table 1. Summary of the analysis of teachers' and learners' use of code switching in the two investigated EFL groups

FUNCTIONS OF CODE SWITCHING IN THE TWO INVESTIGATED GROUPS

Code switching, mainly from L2 to L1, was observed to have several functions in the interactive work among the teacher and the learners in both groups. In this section, we will describe and illustrate the functions that appeared in the analysis of the transcriptions. Due to space limitations, only some of the functions that appeared more frequently in the transcriptions will be described and illustrated in this article. We will start by describing and illustrating the functions of code switching that appeared more frequently in the speech of the teachers. Then, we will describe and illustrate the

functions of code switching that appeared more frequently in the speech of the learners of the two investigated groups.[5]

*Functions of the teachers' code switching*

The analysis of the data collected in the beginner group revealed an extensive use of code switching, mainly L2→L1, in teacher-learner interaction. The functions of the teacher's code switching in the beginner group were: (1) to mark the beginning of class (L1→L2); (2) to get the learners' attention (L2→L1); (3) to maintain the planned structure of the class (L1→L2); (4) to facilitate/clarify understanding of grammatical rules and structures (L2→L1); (5) to provide equivalent meaning(s) in L1/to translate vocabulary (L2→L1); and (6) to give advice (L2→L1). Some of these functions will be described and illustrated next.

Example 1 illustrates one of the moments when the teacher's code switching marks the beginning of class. The learners and the teacher of the beginner group were always interacting in Portuguese before starting the classes. When it was time for the class to begin, the teacher then switched the code into L2. In addition to illustrating a moment when the teacher's code switching (L1→L2) marks the beginning of class, Example 1 also illustrates two other functions of code switching that appeared frequently in the speech of the teacher in the beginner group. The functions are: to get the

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5    Transcript conventions of classroom data
         T teacher
         Sts students altogether
         St1, 2, 3 … identified student
         St unidentified student
         + short pause
         ++ long pause
         (( )) analysts' comments
         XXX inaudible
         ? questioning intonation
         CAPITAL stressed word

learners' attention and to maintain the planned structure of the class.

Example 1

01 T: let's start+ yes?+ all right+ so+ I'd like you to open your books on page 63 ++ any news from the weekend?++ ((the learners continue talking with each other in Portuguese))
did you do anything special over the weekend?++ nada interessante pra contar?++ não?
02 St1: yes+ my Avaiiiii
03 T and Sts: ahhhhhhhhhhhh ((laughs and comments about the two soccer teams of the city: Avai and Figueirense))
04 St2: alguma coisa interessante
05 Sts and T: ((laughs and comments in Portuguese))
06 T: okay+ vamo lá+ aah+ we're going to move to exercise 7+ we're going to skip pronunciation for you to do at home+ okay+ pronunciation é tudo pra faze em casa+ vocês estão fazendo?
07 Sts: ahhh estamos ((laughing))
08 T: okay+ so+ let's take a look at the listening+ exercise 7+ vamo lá meninas?+ you're going to listen to Clarisse and Karl talk about interesting things they've done recently+ okay+ then you're going to complete this chart

In this example, the teacher signals that it is time to start the class by switching codes from L1 to L2 (turn 1). After starting the class, she immediately asks the learners to open their books. While the learners were talking and opening their books, she asks them "any news from the weekend?" (turn 1). However, no one pays attention to her. In a few seconds she asks another question "did you do anything special over the weekend?" (turn 1). Again, the learners do not pay attention to the teacher and go on talking with each other in Portuguese. The teacher then switches from English to Portuguese (L2→L1) "nada interessante pra contar?++"

(turn 1). By doing so, she gets the learners' attention. What is interesting to observe in the Example above is the fact that one of the learners (St1) not only pays attention to the teacher, but also answers in English "yes, my Avaiiiiiiii!" (turn 2). This answer generates laughs among the teacher and the other learners who start commenting on the performance of Avai and Figueirense, the two biggest soccer teams in the city.

It can also be seen from Example 1 that the teacher makes use of code switching (L1→L2) to maintain the planned structure of the class. After a few minutes laughing and interacting in Portuguese with the learners, the teacher, in turn 6, switches back to English (L1→L2) in order to get the learners' attention again and also to maintain the planned structure of the class.

The teacher of the beginner group also switched codes (L2→L1) to provide equivalent meaning(s) in L1 or to translate vocabulary when the learners did not know the meaning of L2 words or expressions, or when they asked the meaning of L2 words and expressions in Portuguese. Before describing and illustrating this function, it is important to mention that there are many instances in which the teacher provided the meaning of L2 words or expressions by using synonyms or gestures. However, there are also several moments when the teacher makes use of code switching (L2→L1) to translate vocabulary.

Example 2 illustrates a moment when the teacher switches codes (L2→L1) to provide the meaning of L2 vocabulary. In the Example, the teacher and the learners are correcting a listening activity. One of the questions of the activity was "What did Karl do?" During the activity, most learners had difficulties in understanding that "Karl went mountain climbing in Switzerland". Therefore, after playing the conversation three times, the teacher herself answers "he went mountain climbing" (turn 36). In order to clarify understanding, she asks "what does it mean? + mountain

climbing?" (turn 42). However, no one answers. The teacher then switches code (L2→L1) to provide the meaning in Portuguese.

> Example 2
>
> 36 T: ahan+ he went to Switzerland +and what did he do there?++ ((no one answers)) que que ele fez lá na suiça?++ ((no one answers)) não escutaram alguma coisa?++
> 37 St: XXX
> 38 T: não?+ ((the teacher plays the conversation again)) he++
> 39 St3: went++ tem uma palavra ali
> 40 T: went mountain+ ((writing the sentence on the board))
> 41 Sts: aaaaaaaaah
> 42 T: he went mountain climbing+ what does it mean?+ mountain climbing?++ ((no one answers)) que que é?++ he went mountain climbing++ ((no one answers)) subi a montanha lá in Switzerland+ and did he like it? ((she plays the tape again))
> 43 St3: really exciting
> 44 T: really exciting+ very good+ it was really exciting ((writing the sentence on the board))+ of course it was dangerous+ but he liked it a lot++ okay+
> 45 St5: o que que é mountain climbing?
> 46 T: mountain climbing é subir a montanha+ escalar a montanha++ vamos escutar esta coisa ((the tape)) em casa+ não tão escutando a fita em casa+ cem vezes quando chega em casa+ tem que escutar todo dia pra acostumar o ouvido+ todo dia todo dia senão a gente esquece tudo+ okay?+

In this Example, the teacher initially switches the code from L2 to L1 to make sure the learners understand the question "what did he do there?" (turn 36) and then to provide the meaning of "mountain climbing" in Portuguese (turn 42). After providing the meaning in L1, she goes on to correct the rest of the activity. However, in turn 45 a learner

asks "o que que é mountain climbing?" Again the teacher resorts to code switching (L2→L1) to provide the meaning of "mountain climbing".

It can also be seen from Example 2 that, in turn 46, the teacher makes use of code switching (L2→L1) to advise the learners. The use of code switching (L2→L1) by the teacher to advise the learners was common in the beginner group. Every time she realized the learners had difficulties in understanding the conversations listened to in class, she switched codes (L2→L1) to advise them to listen to their tapes which contained the contents presented in their textbook, so that they could improve their listening skill at home. By switching the code from English to Portuguese to give advice, the teacher would probably be sure the learners understood her advice.

As already stated, the teacher of the pre-intermediate group also used code switching (L2→L1/L1→L2) in class. In the analysis of the transcriptions, five functions of code switching appeared more frequently in his speech. The functions were: (1) to facilitate/clarify understanding of grammatical rules and structures (L2→L1); (2) to facilitate/ clarify understanding of words and expressions (L2→L1); (3) to elicit L2 vocabulary and grammatical structures (L2→L1); (4) to call the learners' attention to the correct pronunciation of sounds in English (L2→L1) and; (5) to bring about humorous effect. Examples 3 and 4 will illustrate these functions.

Example 3 presents a moment when the teacher switches code (L2→L1) in an attempt to clarify and facilitate understanding of the grammatical structure under study. In the example, the teacher and the learners are talking about ways of making requests in English. Before the Example began, the teacher had explained how people can make requests with modal verbs and if clauses. After the explanation, one of the learners had a doubt and asked the following question: "ah+ can you help me is++ encaixa ai?+ in informal or formal or+" (turn 700). The teacher then invited

the whole class to discuss the question presented by the learner (St3). At a certain point in their interaction, the teacher makes use of code switching (L2→L1) in an attempt to clarify understanding of the grammatical structure under analysis.

Example 3

700 St3: ah+ can you help me is++ encaixa ai+ in informal or formal or+
701 T: okay let's discuss this+ you go to + your are at the library you need+ you need
information about a book you can't find+ you're gonna talk to whom?+
702 St4: the the the
703 Sts: bibliotecária
704 T: the librarian+ the person in the library+ all right+
705 St4: you don't speak ah+ I was thinking if you++
706 T: no+ wha+ what do you use?
707 Sts: yes+ can you?
708 T: can you help me?
709 Sts: yes+ can you help me?
710 T: it would be effective you think+ in a library+ that's the way you'll use it+ oh pode me dá uma força+ pode me dá uma ajuda+ something like that + you wouldn't say something like+ você se importaria de me dizer onde eu posso encontrar o livro?++
711 St4: talvez+ maybe
712 St5: maybe+ depends on the++
713 T: see+ so+ depending on the context you will use one or+
714 St: depending where you are

In this Example, the teacher switches from L2 to L1 to provide instances of informal and formal ways of making requests in Portuguese "oh+ pode me dá uma força+ pode me dá uma ajuda", "você se importaria de me dizer onde eu posso encontrar o livro" (turn 710). By using code switching (L2→L1) to provide the examples, the teacher leads the

learners to reflect on the form under analysis and facilitates understanding of it. At this point, it is important to mention that in some moments during grammar explanations, the teacher of the pre-intermediate group encouraged the learners to think in Portuguese in order to facilitate understanding of the L2 grammatical structures under study.

Example 4 illustrates one of the moments when the teacher makes use of *code switching* (L2→L1) to call the learners' attention to the correct pronunciation of sounds in English. Before the Example began, a learner (St1) was talking about how interesting it would be working as a journalist. Instead of pronouncing "think" /θɪŋk/ and "thing" /θɪŋ/ she pronounced /tɪŋk/ and /tɪŋ/. Other learners had already pronounced /tɪŋk/ and /tɪŋ/ in other moments. Then, in order to help the learners to overcome the difficulty of pronouncing the *th* sound in the words *think* and *thing*, the teacher repeats the sound four times "θ+θ+θ+θ" (turn 459) and switches code to Portuguese (L2→L1) to explain how the *th* sound under analysis was produced.

Example 4

452 St1: ((reading her paragraph)) I think ((pronouncing /tɪŋk/)) working as a bus collector is too boring because you pass all the day doing the same thing ((pronouncing /tɪŋ/)) and sometimes people are impolite with this profession+ contrarily+ being a journalist you go to many countries+ to write for a magazine XXX know many cultures+ many interesting people+ delicious food+ visit cool places XXX
453 T: MAN+ what am I doing as an English teacher?
454 Sts: ((laughs))
455 T: I wanna become a journalist!
456 Sts: ((laughs))
457 T: I chose the wrong profession!+ just allow me to to+ just one correction+ how do we say coisa in English?
458 Sts: thing+ ting+ thing

459 T: so+θ+ θ+ θ+ θ
460 Sts: thing
461 T: como se fosse cuspi mesmo!
462 Sts: ((laughs))
463 T: essas pessoas que falam assim+ thing+ thing+
464 Sts: ((laughs))
465 T: I know it's difficult+ it's but+ go in front of the mirror+ THING+ you get there+ anybody else would like to share?+ + come on!
466 Sts: ((laughs))

In this Example, the teacher encourages the learners to pronounce the *th* sound in the word "thing" by saying "como se fosse cuspi mesmo!" "essas pessoas que falam assim+ thing+ thing+" (turns 461 and 463). Instead of pronouncing the *s* /s/ or double *ss* /s/ in the words "*fosse, cuspi, mesmo, essas, pessoas,* and *assim*", the teacher pronounces /θ/. The sentences "como se fosse cuspi mesmo!" and "essas pessoas que falam assim" become funny if the s or double ss is pronounced /θ/. Therefore, the teacher's *code switching* in the Example transcribed above contributed to generate a humorous moment as well as created a more relaxed atmosphere in class. Moreover, the teacher's *code switching* from L2 to L1 in this Example provided an opportunity for the learners to acquire or reinforce the correct pronunciation of the *th* /θ/ sound in the words under analysis.

The analysis of the functions of teachers' *code s witching* in the two investigated EFL groups is summarized and presented in Table 2.

| Beginner group teacher | Pre-intermediate group teacher |
|---|---|
| • to mark the beginning of class;<br>• to get the learners' attention;<br>• to maintain the planned structure of the class;<br>• to facilitate/clarify understanding of grammatical rules, structures; words and expressions;<br>• to provide equivalent meaning(s) in L1/to translate vocabulary;<br>• to give advice. | • to facilitate/clarify understanding of grammatical rules, structures,<br>• to facilitate/clarify understanding of words and expressions;<br>• to elicit L2 vocabulary and grammatical structures;<br>• to call the learners' attention to the correct pronunciation of sounds in English<br>• to bring about humorous effect. |

Table 2. Summary of the functions and types of the two teachers' use of *code switching*

In what follows, we will describe and illustrate some of the functions of learners' code switching.

*Functions of the learners' code switching*

The analysis of the functions of code switching in the learners' speech has shown that, although the learners of the two investigated groups were in different levels of proficiency in English, the functions of code switching that appeared more frequently in the speech of the learners were the same in both groups. However, whereas the learners of the beginner group used extensive code switching in their classes, the pre-intermediate learners used minimum code switching. In both groups, the functions that appeared more frequently were: (1) to maintain the flow of conversation (L2→L1); (2) to fill a linguistic gap (L2→L1→L2); (3) to provide equivalent meaning(s) in L1/to translate vocabulary (L2→L1); (4) to ask equivalent meaning(s) in L1 or L2 (L2→L1); (5) to ask about grammatical rules or structures (L2→L1); and (6) to clarify understanding of grammatical rules/structures (L2→L1). Some of these functions will be also described and illustrated with examples.

Example 5 illustrates the learners' use of code switching (L2→L1) to maintain the flow of conversation/to fill a

linguistic gap. In the Example, a learner (St5) of the beginner group is talking about her hometown. In some moments she does not know how to say in English what she wants to say. Then, she switches to L1 in order to maintain the flow of the conversation (turns 72, 76 and 82).

Example 5

59 T: you're going to talk about your hometowns again+ okay+ let's take a look at the questions+ okay+ ah+ for example+ where are you from? ((pointing and asking to one of the learners))
60 St5: Marilena
61 T: Marilena?+ where is it?
62 St5: Paraná
63 T: in Paraná?+ okay+ Marilena+ okay+ ah+ is it an interesting place?
64 St5: ((makes a negative gesture with her head))
65 T: no+ it isn't+ okay+ is it+ is it very big?
66 St5: no+ it's small
67 T: no+ it's small+ is it safe?
68 St5: +yes
69 T: yes+ is it clean?
70 St5: no ((laughs))
71 T: no+ it's dirty?
72 St5: ((incomprehensible comments in Portuguese)) yes+ tem aquele barro vermelho
73 T: ah+ it's+ ahan+ okay+ so+ it's a problem+ you do not have++ ah+ sidewalks++ pavement
74 St5: no pavement XXX
75 T: ahan
76 St5: não sei como é que se diz+ tem poeira
77 T: dust+ dust+ ahan
78 Sts: dust
79 T: não tem então calçada+ calçamento XXX+ we love it here ((laughing))+ is it expensive?
80 St5: no+ it's cheap
81 T: cheap+ what's the nightlife like?+ is it very exciting? ((laughs))

82St5: ((laughs)) não tem nada pra fazer
83T: there aren't good restaurants+ no bars+
82St5: NO+ XXX

As can be seen from Example 5, code switching (L2→L1) was an important communication strategy which enabled the learner (St25) to carry on speaking, express her ideas and participate in class. In the given example, the learner tried to express her ideas in English. However, she switched to Portuguese (L2→L1) in moments when she felt she was unable to carry on speaking in L2, or when she did not know how to say in English what she wanted to say, that is, when she needed to maintain the flow of conversation or to fill a linguistic gap. These functions of learners' code switching appeared more in the analysis of the transcriptions of the beginner group.

The learners of the two investigated groups also made use of code switching to ask about grammatical rules/ structures and to clarify understanding of grammatical rules/ structures. These functions will be illustrated in Example 6. The example illustrates a moment when the learners of the pre-intermediate group switch code to clarify understanding of the grammatical structure under study. In the Example, the teacher and the learners are correcting a grammatical activity which involved direct and indirect requests. Before the example began, the learners had done an activity in which they had to rewrite a few sentences as indirect requests. During the correction of the activity some learners were confused and did not understand why the question "Could you ask Tony how many of my friends can I bring to his party?" was not grammatically correct. The teacher then explains the grammatical structure again. After the explanation, a learner (St1) makes use of code switching (L2→L1) to clarify understanding of the grammatical structure under analysis.

Example 6

1098 T: do you agree? + can I or I can?
1099 St1: I can
1100 T: I can because you see the question part is in the beginning+ could you ask Tonny how many of my friends I can bring to his party? + because of could a inversão do verbo com o pronome já tá no início+ could I?
1101 St1: então quando é pergunta permanece
1102 T: yeah+ so the second part is not+ the beginning of the question anymore it's just a continuation+ you don't need to invert

It can be seen from this Example that a few words in Portuguese "a inversão do verbo com o pronome já tá no início" uttered by the teacher seemed enough for the learner (St1) to understand the grammatical rule under analysis. The learner (St1), on the other hand, uses the L1 to make sure he understood the teacher's explanation (turn 1101).

The analysis of the functions of learners' code switching in the two investigated EFL groups is summarized and presented in Table 3.

| Pre-intermediate group learners | Beginner group learners |
|---|---|
| • to maintain the flow of conversation | • to maintain the flow of conversation |
| • to fill a linguistic gap | • to provide equivalent meaning(s) in L1/to translate vocabulary |
| • to provide equivalent meaning(s) in L1 | |
| • to ask equivalent meaning(s) in L2 | • to ask equivalent meaning(s) in L1 |
| • to ask about grammatical rules or structures to clarify understanding of grammatical rules or structures | • to ask about grammatical rules or structures |
| | • to clarify understanding of grammatical rules or structures |

Table 3. Functions and types of the learners' use of code switching

FINAL REMARKS

This article has presented the results of a qualitative study which has investigated the use of code switching in both a beginner and a pre-intermediate EFL classroom. The data analysis has shown that: 1) the teachers and the learners of the two investigated groups switched codes in their classes; 2) in both groups, there was a frequent use of code switching in some moments; 3) code switching in teacher's speech had specific functions in each group investigated; 4) although the investigated groups were in different levels of proficiency, the functions of learners' code switching were the same in both groups.

This article has also shown that code switching from L2 to L1 and L1 to L2 had several important functions to play in both EFL groups investigated. This finding corroborates other studies on the issue (Antón and Dicamilla, 1999; Flyman-Mattsson and Burenhult, 1999; Braga, 2000; Cipriani, 2001; Macaro, 2001; Martinez, 2001; Moreira, 2001; Bergsleithner, 2002; Turnbull, 2002; Arnfast and Jorgensen, 2003; Melo, 2005), and suggests that code switching in teacher-learner(s) interaction in the foreign language classroom may have an important role in facilitating interaction among classroom participants as well as in facilitating foreign language learning in general.

Although the findings presented in this article are based on classroom observation and on the analysis of transcriptions of only two EFL groups, they suggest that those who work in the area of foreign/second language learning/acquisition should not disregard the beneficial aspect that code switching may have not only in teacher-learner interaction in the foreign language classroom, but also in foreign language learning. However, more research on code switching should be done in order to enhance our understanding of the demands of the learning situation in the foreign language classroom. Some suggestions for further

investigation may include: (1) observing the use of code switching in groups of the same level of proficiency; (2) investigating teachers' and learners' perceptions and beliefs about the use of code switching in the EFL classroom; and (3) investigating the functions of learners' code switching in pair or group work.

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**Título:** *Mudança de código por parte do professor e dos alunos na sala de aula de Inglês como Língua Estrangeira: um estudo qualitativo*

**Resumo:** *Desde os anos 90, pesquisadores têm investigado vários aspectos relacionados ao uso da língua estrangeira e da língua materna na sala de aula de língua estrangeira. Estudos mostram que a língua materna pode ter funções importantes na sala de aula de língua estrangeira. O objetivo principal deste artigo é mostrar os resultados de um estudo qualitativo que investigou o uso alternado de inglês e de português na interação professor – aluno(s) na sala de aula de inglês como língua estrangeira. Os dados foram coletados em uma turma iniciante e em uma turma de nível pré-intermediário. Doze aulas foram observadas, gravadas em áudio e analisadas em cada um dos grupos. Os resultados deste estudo sugerem que o uso alternado de inglês e português na sala de aula de língua estrangeira pode ter um papel importante ao facilitar a interação entre os participantes e facilitar a aprendizagem da língua estrangeira.*

**Palavras-chave:** *uso alternado de português e inglês; funções; sala de aula de inglês como língua estrangeira.*