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Code-Switching in the Second Language Classroom: A Narrative Study of a Saudi English Language Teacher’s Experience

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Abstract
This narrative study explores the use of code-switching in the second-language classroom from the perspective of a Saudi English language instructor. The aim was to explore how the instructor experienced code-switching as a student and used it in her teaching. The main research question guiding the study was: How does a Saudi English language teacher perceive and utilize code-switching in her teaching practice, and how does this relate to her experiences as a language learner? The study holds significance in contributing to the ongoing discourse on code-switching in second-language classrooms, providing a nuanced understanding from the perspective of an individual who has experienced it as both a learner and a teacher. Examining code-switching from the viewpoint of a Saudi English instructor can offer valuable insights into teaching practices, student engagement, cognitive benefits, and sociolinguistic dynamics within the Saudi educational context, where Arabic is the dominant language and English is increasingly important. The study utilized a narrative inquiry approach involving a series of interviews. However, excessive reliance on code-switching may hinder language acquisition, and learners should gradually reduce their dependence on it as their proficiency improves. The study provided valuable insights into the lived experiences of second language learners and teachers, underscoring the need for further research using this methodology in the field of second language acquisition.

Keywords: Code-switching, English language learning, Saudi English language classroom, second language acquisition
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Introduction

Code-switching (CS), the alternation between two or more languages within a single discourse, is a common phenomenon in multilingual settings, including second-language classrooms (Gumperz, 1982; Woolard, 2005). Despite its prevalence, the use of code-switching in second language teaching remains a controversial topic, with debates surrounding its potential benefits and drawbacks in language acquisition. This study aims to explore the role of code-switching in the second language classroom from the perspective of a Saudi English language teacher named Sarah. The primary research question is: How does a Saudi English language teacher perceive and utilize code-switching in her teaching practice, and how does this relate to her experiences as a language learner? The study's significance lies in its contribution to the ongoing discourse on code-switching in second-language classrooms, providing a nuanced understanding from the perspective of an individual who has experienced it as both a learner and a teacher. Some researchers argue that it can hinder second language acquisition by reducing exposure to the target language (Cook, 1991; Alrabah et al., 2015), while others maintain that it can facilitate learning by providing scaffolding and reducing affective barriers (Skinner, 1985; Littlewood & Yu, 2011). This study employs a narrative inquiry approach to explore the use of code-switching in the second language classroom from the perspective of a Saudi English language teacher named Sarah. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that focuses on the lived experiences of individuals as expressed through their stories (Creswell, 2013). By examining Sarah's experiences as a student and teacher, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the role of code-switching in second language learning and teaching.

Literature Review

Code-switching (CS) refers to the alternation between two or more languages within a single discourse or utterance (Gumperz, 1982). It is a common phenomenon in multilingual societies, including the Saudi Arabian speech community, where Arabic and English are frequently used interchangeably in various contexts (Alowidha, 2024). Alowidha (2024) states, “There is a considerable amount of borrowed English words in the Arabic language used in the region” (p. 2852). In his 2016 study on Saudi learners, Masrahi found that Saudis code-switch for both learning and social reasons. “Similar to other bilinguals, bilingual Saudis code-switch when they lack the appropriate word or phrase, using code-switching to fill gaps and maintain the flow of conversation” (Alowidha, 2024, p. 2853). Code-switching helps people identify with a group and show respect and connection to it.

Additionally, bilinguals may code-switch to demonstrate their linguistic abilities, signal belonging to a particular nationality, follow community trends, or for prestigious reasons. Code-switching also arises in educational contexts to clarify or simplify ideas (Masrahi, 2016). The use of code-switching in second-language classrooms has been the subject of numerous studies, yielding mixed results. Alrabah et al. (2015) concluded that code-switching can negatively impact students' target language input and output, with teachers expressing guilt over the loss of second language exposure. Similarly, Cook (1991) argued that the more the first language is used, the less exposure students have to the second language.

On the other hand, several studies have highlighted the potential benefits of code-switching in second language learning. Learner personality and individual differences are key factors in learning a second language (Brown, 2014). Tenés et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between language proficiency and code-switching behavior in dual-language-learning children.
The study aimed to identify the predictors of code-switching in this population, considering factors such as language dominance, vocabulary size, and grammatical competence. The researchers determined that language dominance and vocabulary size were significant predictors of code-switching behavior, with children who had a more balanced proficiency in both languages and larger vocabularies exhibiting less code-switching. The study highlights the importance of considering individual differences in language proficiency when examining code-switching behavior in dual-language learners and contributes to the understanding of the complex interplay between language proficiency and code-switching in this population.

Littlewood and Yu (2011) found that teachers used code-switching for various purposes, such as checking understanding, establishing social relations, and explaining grammar. Ghaderi, Moghaddam, and Ostovar-Namaghi (2024) conducted a study exploring teachers' strategies and motivations for using code-switching in English language classrooms. Their research revealed that teachers employed code-switching as a deliberate and strategic tool to enhance language instruction and facilitate student learning. The study identified several key motivations for code-switching, including clarifying complex concepts, building rapport with students, and accommodating learners' diverse language proficiencies. Additionally, the authors found that teachers used code-switching to create a more inclusive and comfortable learning environment, which encouraged student participation and engagement. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature that recognizes the potential benefits of code-switching as a pedagogical tool in second-language classrooms, while also highlighting the importance of teachers' intentional and strategic use of this practice to support effective language instruction. Similarly, Tang (2002) observed that teachers in China used the first language to explain abstract or culturally specific words and give instructions in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.

In light of the findings from Tenés et al. (2023), which investigated the relationship between language proficiency and code-switching behavior in dual-language-learning children, the current study aims to expand on this research by exploring the role of learner personality in relation to code-switching. While previous studies have identified learner personality and individual differences as important factors in second language acquisition (Brown, 2014), few have examined how these factors specifically influence code-switching behavior. By delving into Sarah's experiences and perspectives as both a language learner and teacher, this study seeks to address this gap in the literature and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between learner personality, language proficiency, and code-switching in the context of second language learning and teaching. The findings suggest that code-switching can have a positive effect on students and the classroom environment, particularly in the early stages of learning. The study also highlights the importance of learner personality and the role of teachers in supporting students' language development. Teachers recognize the pedagogical benefits of code-switching, however, its usage should be carefully monitored to avoid over-reliance on the first language (Hazaymeh, 2022). Despite the growing body of research on code-switching in second-language classrooms, there is a lack of studies that explore the experiences and perspectives of both language learners and teachers. While previous studies have investigated either the learner's or the teacher's perspective, few have examined the interplay between the two perspectives and how personal experiences with code-switching as a learner can shape a teacher's approach to using this strategy in the classroom.
There is a lack of studies that specifically explore the experiences and perspectives of Saudi English language teachers who have experienced code-switching as both learners and educators. Previous studies have either focused on the learner's perspective or the teacher's perspective, but few have examined the interplay between these two perspectives and how personal experiences with code-switching as a learner can shape a teacher's approach to using this strategy in the classroom (Alowidha, 2024, Alrabh et al. 2015, Masrahai 2016).

To address this gap, the present study aims to explore the role of code-switching in the second language classroom from the perspective of a teacher who has also experienced code-switching as a language learner. By examining Sarah's dual perspectives, this study provides a unique opportunity to understand how personal experiences with code-switching as a learner can inform and shape a teacher's approach to using this strategy in the classroom. As Ghaderi et al. (2024) argue, "teachers' motivations and strategies for code-switching are deeply rooted in their own experiences as language learners, and this connection warrants further investigation" (p. 18).

The present study extends the work of Ghaderi, Moghaddam, and Ostovar-Namaghi (2024) by examining code-switching from the perspective of a teacher who has also experienced code-switching as a language learner. By exploring Sarah's dual perspectives, this study provides a unique opportunity to understand how personal experiences with code-switching as a learner can inform and shape a teacher's approach to using this strategy in the classroom. Furthermore, the study's narrative inquiry approach allows for a more in-depth exploration of the motivations, strategies, and perceived benefits of code-switching from the perspective of an individual who has experienced it both as a learner and a teacher.

**Methodology**

To address the research question, "How does a Saudi English language teacher perceive and utilize code-switching in her teaching practice, and how does this relate to her experiences as a language learner?" this study employed a qualitative narrative methodology. Following the frameworks outlined by Creswell (2013) and Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002), the study explored Sarah's experiences with code-switching both as a student and as a teacher.

**Participants**

The participant, Sarah, is a Saudi English language teacher with over five years of teaching experience. She completed a four-year undergraduate program in English at a university in Saudi Arabia, where she acquired English as a second language. Focusing on a single subject, Sarah, in this narrative study, allows for an in-depth exploration of the intricate and personal experiences of code-switching in a second-language classroom. By concentrating on Sarah's journey from a student to a teacher, the study captures the evolution of her attitudes and strategies toward code-switching, providing rich, contextualized insights that are crucial for understanding the practice's nuanced effects. This personalized approach enables the investigation of how her unique cultural background, educational experiences, and professional environment influence her teaching methods and interactions with students. Moreover, it highlights individual differences and the significant role of instructor influence in language acquisition, offering a detailed and empathetic portrayal that broadens the understanding of code-switching's impact on second language learning.
Research Procedures

This study, informed by Creswell (2013) and Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002), employed a qualitative narrative methodology to explore Sarah's experiences with code-switching both as a student and as a teacher. Over three weeks, three interviews were conducted via Zoom, each focusing on different aspects of Sarah's experiences with code-switching. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was conducted in Arabic, the primary language of the participants. Engaging in conversation in the native language created a more relaxed atmosphere, fostering a conversational tone throughout the interviews. The interviews were recorded using Zoom for later reference. The emphasis of each of the three interviews varied. The first interview focused on Sarah's experience learning English as a second language. The second interview covered her experience teaching English to Arabic students. The third interview explored her overall views on learning and teaching English and her insights into code-switching.

Following each interview, the researcher transcribed the dialogue into Arabic and then translated it into English to begin the coding process. The researcher meticulously reviewed the text, annotating keywords and phrases related to the study's topic, before generating initial codes. Following Ollerenshaw and Creswell's (2002) framework, the data was structured into five plot elements, organizing events and sequencing attempts or occurrences. Subsequently, the data was categorized into themes by identifying stories within the transcripts, establishing connections between them, and amalgamating them. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, to identify patterns and themes within the transcripts.

Research Instrument

We used purposive sampling to select Sarah for this research. According to Leedy et al. (2019), purposive sampling involves selecting individuals or objects that can provide the most relevant information about the topic being investigated. The participant, Sarah, is a Saudi English language teacher with over five years of teaching experience. Sarah completed a four-year undergraduate program in English at a university in Saudi Arabia, where she was simultaneously honing her English language skills. She graduated with a commendable GPA (Grade Point Average). One of the authors initially met Sarah during a class in the master's degree program. Notably, Sarah distinguished herself as one of the brightest students in the class, earning praise from her professors and demonstrating high proficiency in her second language. Sarah possessed considerable teaching experience exceeding five years. Additionally, she acquired English as a second language, with Arabic being her primary language. Furthermore, Sarah exhibited a strong interest in code-switching. Therefore, she represented a valuable and knowledgeable participant in this research.

Findings

Sarah categorizes her bachelor's degree experience into two phases: the first two years and the final two years. Given that a bachelor's degree in Saudi Arabia traditionally spanned four years, Sarah's delineation provides a valuable framework for examining her encounters with code-switching. In this paper, we delve into these two themes, which encapsulate the majority of Sarah's experiences with language alternation. Notably, significant gaps exist between these...
segments of her academic life. The findings are presented in two main themes, reflecting Sarah's experiences as a student and teacher: "The First Two Years" and "The Last Two Years."

**The First Two Years: Necessity and Helpfulness of Code-Switching**

Sarah's journey as an English language learner was marked by the strategic use of code-switching, particularly in her first two years of study. She found that her native language, Arabic, played a crucial role in her learning process, serving as a supportive tool to navigate the complexities of acquiring a second language. In her own words, Sarah described Arabic as a "helper" and believed that it was impossible to start learning a second language without using her first language as a foundation. In her first two years as an English language student, Sarah found code-switching to be a necessary and helpful strategy. Below is Sarah’s statement:

(code-switching help me to progress it was a basic it was impossible to start learn a second language without being my first language is the helper my first language is found to be helper for me to learn the English language or any other language this for me even when I start teaching the first language remind necessary even if we refuse it and call for not being used it.

Sarah's teachers, who were also Arabic speakers, employed code-switching as a pedagogical strategy to facilitate learning. They used Arabic to explain vocabulary, discuss ideas, and clarify grammar points, recognizing the value of leveraging the students' first language to enhance their understanding of English. When Sarah enrolled in the new department, she found herself in an unfamiliar environment, surrounded by new faces and grappling with a limited command of the English language. She reflected on the challenges she faced during this time:

(it was impossible I will success in the university without using Arabic language the Arabic was everything especially the first two years it was four years in the bachelor the first two years I can say uh 80 % was by Arabic after that period the Arabic using is decrease especially after we know how to used the English-English dictionary.

Sarah's reflection on her university experience reveals the critical role that Arabic played in her academic success, particularly during the first two years of her four-year bachelor's degree program. She candidly admitted that it would have been "impossible" for her to succeed without relying heavily on her native language. Arabic was "everything" to her during this period, serving as a vital tool for comprehension and communication. Sarah acknowledged that her reliance on Arabic was particularly pronounced during the first two years of her four-year bachelor's degree program. She estimated that approximately 80% of her language use during this period was in Arabic. However, as she progressed in her studies and gained proficiency in using English-English dictionaries, her dependence on Arabic gradually decreased.

Reflecting on this period, she expressed, "My language was nothing, it was zero." Both students and instructors predominantly spoke Arabic, reflecting the university's constraints in providing adequate English language resources. As a growth-oriented institution, financial limitations precluded the establishment of essential language-learning facilities such as language labs or the hiring of English-speaking educators. Consequently, the reliance on local resources was paramount, with instructors primarily hailing from Arabic-speaking countries. Lacking an English center or internet connectivity, classes often revolved around instructors reading passages during reading and speaking sessions.
the teacher usually read the dialogues in textbook by herself, with Saudi accent so when we hear any American or British accent it was difficult for us to understand. Because the lack of supplement at school

Despite the evident shortcomings in resources, Sarah acknowledged the value of code-switching during her initial years. She asserted, "Code-switching helped me to progress," emphasizing the necessity of utilizing Arabic as a scaffold for understanding academic content. Describing Arabic as a "helper," she highlighted its role in facilitating comprehension and task completion within the classroom. Sarah's positive portrayal of code-switching, evident in her use of affirmative adjectives such as "necessary" and "root," underscores its efficacy as a pedagogical strategy. Even as a teacher, Sarah continues to rely on code-switching to engage her students effectively.

Notably, Sarah quantified her reliance on Arabic, estimating that approximately 80% of her language use during the first two years was in her native tongue. This significant proportion underscores the extent to which code-switching was integral to her learning process, enabling her to bridge the gap between her existing knowledge and the new concepts she encountered in her coursework. However, Sarah also acknowledged that her dependence on Arabic diminished over time, particularly as she developed the skills to effectively use English-English dictionaries. This shift marked a crucial milestone in her language acquisition journey, as she gradually became more self-sufficient in navigating the challenges of learning a second language.

Sarah's experiences highlight the dynamic nature of code-switching as a learning strategy, with its importance being most pronounced during the early stages of language acquisition and gradually declining as learners develop greater proficiency and autonomy in the target language.

**The Last Two Years: Reducing Reliance on Code-Switching and Developing Language Proficiency**

During the latter half of her bachelor's degree, Sarah embarked on a journey of self-assessment, evaluating her language proficiency and progress by scrutinizing her usage of Arabic. Sarah began to view her use of Arabic as a weakness and actively worked to reduce her reliance on code-switching. She immersed herself in English-language media and sought out opportunities to practice her language skills. During this time, Sarah also encountered a Pakistani teacher who did not speak Arabic, so she was in contact with the students in English. This was the first time Sarah had contact with a speaker who only spoke English. She struggled to understand this teacher, and when the teacher asked a question, Sarah and her classmates asked each other what she meant.

The last two years my depending Arabic language was decrease and I saw that a weakness on my language to used the Arabic language at the end of the second year I was feeling I don’t improved and our teaching wasn’t good and I have a problem and I was struggle then I discover it was very important

She observed a gradual decline in her reliance on her first language, Arabic, perceiving even minimal usage as indicative of linguistic weakness. Reflecting on this transition, Sarah remarked, "The last 2 years, my dependence on the Arabic language decreased and I saw it as a weakness to use the Arabic language." During this period, Sarah had a new teacher who was from Pakistan and could not speak Arabic, so she was in contact with the students in English. This was the first time Sarah had contact with a speaker who only spoke English. She struggled to understand this teacher, and when the teacher asked a question, Sarah and her classmates asked each other what she meant. The teacher was experiencing the same thing as she didn’t understand Arabic. So, students started
using more English in the classroom. However, at the end of the semester, the students were familiar with the teacher and her wants, and the teacher understood the students’ needs. Sarah found it difficult to understand this teacher because of the accent variation. The teacher spoke with a Pakistani accent, but the students were familiar with the Arabic accent. At this time, Sarah discovered a new problem she had in her language. This was not the only situation in which she encountered accent variation. She had the same difficulties with the British and American accents. However, at the end of her bachelor’s degree, accent variation was no longer a struggle for Sarah. With the improvement of her language skills, accents did not affect her language comprehension anymore, especially when she went to the United States to study for higher education. In this period of her life, her English comprehension rose to a high level. Her prior bachelor's degree and teaching experience contributed to her improvement. She stated, “If I did not start with code-switching, I think I would not have been successful in my master’s degree.” Sarah emphasized, "I dedicated significant attention to this skill because I recognized that speaking was my greatest weakness." She attributed her awareness of this weakness to the notable contrast between Saudi and American pedagogical approaches. While Saudi education prioritizes reading and listening, with less emphasis on speaking, American pedagogy places greater importance on oral communication, discussion, and expressing one's opinions. Below are Sarah’s thoughts:

When the accent that you familiar with change for the first time is difficult and you can’t understand what happen. After a months of dealing with this new faculty we start understand her speech and start ask each other did you observe we start understand what she said while in the first month she was struggle and we also struggle we can’t understand what she said and she wait from us an answers and we are silent waiting her to finish

Motivated to bolster her language competence, she deliberately curtailed her use of Arabic and code-switching, redirecting her focus towards immersive English-language media consumption. By engaging with English-language series, songs, and movies, and sharing these experiences with friends, Sarah honed her language skills and gained insights into Western perspectives, thereby broadening her linguistic and cultural horizons. Consequently, her English proficiency flourished, culminating in a heightened fluency and comprehension. Below, Sarah shares her experience with media:

I was listening to um Ricky martin, and other multiple singers. They were in my teenager period. I was interesting to translate the words understand how they were thinking uh how they express themselves, at the beginning I found these materials on the TV then we get the internet so we keep watch them on the YouTube and the other websites.

Sarah's interest in English-language media was not limited to academic materials; she actively sought out entertainment content to supplement her language learning. She specifically mentioned listening to Ricky Martin and other popular singers during her teenage years, indicating a personal connection to the music and a desire to engage with English-language content on a more intimate level.

Sarah's motivation for engaging with these materials went beyond mere enjoyment. She expressed a genuine curiosity about the lyrics, eager to "translate the words" and "understand how they were thinking" and "how they express themselves." This demonstrates a deep interest in the
cultural and linguistic nuances embedded in the music, as well as a desire to comprehend the perspectives and experiences of the artists.

Initially, Sarah accessed these English-language materials through television, which provided her with a readily available source of authentic content. However, as technology advanced and the internet became more accessible, she and her peers transitioned to online platforms such as YouTube and other websites to continue engaging with these resources. This shift highlights the evolving nature of language learning in the digital age, with learners increasingly leveraging online tools and platforms to access a wider range of authentic content.

By actively seeking out and engaging with English-language media, Sarah not only improved her language skills but also gained valuable insights into Western culture and perspectives. This exposure broadened her linguistic and cultural horizons, enabling her to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the English-speaking world.

Sarah's experience underscores the importance of immersive language learning experiences, particularly through the consumption of authentic media content. By combining her academic pursuits with a personal interest in English-language entertainment, Sarah was able to accelerate her language acquisition and develop a more nuanced understanding of the language and its associated cultures.

**Transitioning to Teaching: Embracing Code-Switching for Classroom Engagement**

Sarah's transition to the role of educator prompted a shift in her teaching methodology. Initially dependent on English, she noted a pervasive sense of disinterest among her students, with only proficient English speakers actively participating. Recognizing the need for a dynamic approach, Sarah embraced code-switching as a means to enhance classroom engagement for all learners. While not all students initially responded, the majority exhibited increased interest and participation, resulting in a more dynamic learning environment. Sarah's willingness to adapt her teaching style reflects her commitment to fostering effective communication and learning.

I didn’t use code switching at the first years of my teaching and most of the students seemed to be not involved in the class at all. Only the students who were already successful in English participated and the rest were only waiting for the class to end. When I practiced code switching all students became involved and participated.

Identifying her weaknesses, Sarah sought strategies to enhance her language proficiency, particularly in writing. Guided by her professor's advice to organize thoughts directly in English rather than translating from Arabic, she adopted this approach to improve her writing skills. Inspired by her own experiences, Sarah now imparts this guidance to her high school students, recognizing its transformative potential in enhancing writing coherence and clarity. By advocating for a shift in cognitive processes from translation to direct English expression, Sarah empowers her students to produce more coherent and impactful written work.

I was right and thinking I am doing right but when I [went] back to reread it I feel the ideas are not connected so one of my professor mention that when you start writing don’t think in Arabic language because you will going to translate from Arabic to English, instead start thinking by English and organize the ideas in your brain by using English and write it down because when you think in Arabic then translate to English is wrong and your writing
will be weak since I used this advice my writing is progress really there are a difference when I think in Arabic it be like I translate in wrong way from Arabic to English is never look like an essay in English uh this was one uh I still say that for my students because I never hear this advice before until I experience it usually now when I start grading my students writing I know and it clear the students who think in Arabic and translate to English.

In addition to cognitive strategies, Sarah honed her speaking skills through dedicated practice. Overcoming initial shyness, she embraced her teacher's advice to rehearse presentations in front of a mirror, gradually acclimating to public speaking and refining her pronunciation. Her poised demeanor, articulate speech, and confident delivery stand as testaments to the efficacy of deliberate practice and targeted feedback in skill development. Through perseverance and strategic guidance, Sarah transformed her anxieties into strengths, embodying the transformative power of intentional language practice.

The most difficult thing I face through the four skills was the speaking, we wasn’t familiar with speaking we were usually depend on input skills listening and reading but not speaking we was embarrassed the most strategy I used was one of my professor advise me about it was to talk with myself front the mirror to start discover my mistake and correct myself not only correct myself but I want to be familiar with myself when speak in English as they said normalized I want to normalize it to be normal to see myself speak in English this was the most thing that help me that talk with myself on the mirror also the other thing too was the reading uh reading it help me to increase my vocabulary when I want to write that help me in writing I always reading in our courses or any other materials I found in English I was read

In her role as a teacher, Sarah initially relied heavily on Arabic in her classes, but found that this approach led to a boring classroom environment. By incorporating code-switching, she observed increased student engagement and participation. Sarah also emphasized the importance of learner personality, noting that her own self-awareness and willingness to accept advice helped her improve her language skills.

The students were comfortable in class and some of them expressed that they are more comfortable, confident, and not intimated any more. A group of my students said that they only knew the words yes and no in English and that English class was the only class they wanted to get over with. They always waited for the class to end. They were never involved in the learning process. The same students expressed their thoughts and feelings about learning English with the help of their native language. all of them felt confident and involved in the learning process. One of them said I don’t feel I am not part of this anymore. In fact, anyone can learn English it is so easy.

As a teacher, Sarah recognizes the value of code-switching for lower-level students but encourages her students to challenge themselves and fight to learn English. She maintains contact with her students outside of class, providing resources and support to help them improve their language skills.
Discussion

Circling back to the main research question - How does a Saudi English language teacher perceive and utilize code-switching in her teaching practice, and how does this relate to her experiences as a language learner? Sarah's narrative offers insightful perspectives into this query. During her initial two years of studying English at university, Sarah perceived code-switching as an indispensable and beneficial strategy as a language learner. Her instructors, who were also native Arabic speakers, employed code-switching to elucidate vocabulary, expound on concepts, and clarify grammatical points. Sarah approximated that around 80% of her language usage during this period was in Arabic. This aligns with the findings of Littlewood and Yu (2011) and Tang (2002), who observed that teachers used the first language to facilitate understanding and communication. However, in the latter half of her bachelor's degree, Sarah began to view her reliance on Arabic as a weakness and actively worked to reduce her use of code-switching. This echoes the concerns raised by Cook (1991) and Alrabah et al. (2015), who argued that excessive use of the first language can reduce exposure to the target language and hinder second language acquisition. As a teacher, Sarah initially relied heavily on Arabic in her classes but found that this approach led to a boring classroom environment. By incorporating code-switching, she observed increased student engagement and participation, particularly for lower-level students. This offers a nuanced perspective compared to the findings of Alrabah et al. (2015), who found that code-switching can negatively impact students' target language input and output. Sarah's experiences suggest that strategic use of code-switching can create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment, aligning with the arguments put forth by Littlewood and Yu (2011) and Tang (2002), who emphasize the potential benefits of code-switching as a pedagogical tool. Sarah's narrative also highlights the importance of learner personality and individual differences in second language acquisition, a factor identified as crucial by researchers such as Brown (2014). Sarah's self-awareness, persistence, and willingness to seek out practice opportunities emerged as key factors in her successful language learning journey.

In summary, the findings from Sarah's narrative provide a nuanced understanding of code-switching in second language learning and teaching, supporting and extending the existing literature referenced in the paper. Her experiences underscore the potential benefits of judicious code-switching for facilitating comprehension and engagement, while also highlighting the need for learners to gradually reduce their reliance on the first language as proficiency improves. The study also emphasizes the role of individual learner characteristics in shaping the effectiveness of code-switching as a pedagogical tool.

The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding the role of code-switching in second-language classrooms. Sarah's experiences as a learner suggest that code-switching can be a valuable tool in the early stages of language acquisition, aligning with the findings of Littlewood and Yu (2011) and Tang (2002), who observed that teachers used the first language to facilitate understanding and communication. However, Sarah's recognition of her excessive reliance on Arabic as a weakness in the later stages of her learning journey echoes the concerns raised by Cook (1991) and Alrabah et al. (2015), who argued that excessive use of the first language can reduce exposure to the target language and hinder second language acquisition.

As a teacher, Sarah's use of code-switching to increase student engagement and participation offers a nuanced perspective. While Alrabah et al. (2015) found that code-switching can negatively impact students' target language input and output, Sarah's experiences suggest that strategic use of code-switching can create a more dynamic and engaging learning environment,
particularly for lower-level students. This finding aligns with the arguments put forth by Littlewood and Yu (2011) and Tang (2002), who emphasize the potential benefits of code-switching as a pedagogical tool.

Sarah's narrative also sheds light on the importance of learner personality and individual differences in second language acquisition, a factor identified as crucial by researchers such as Brown (2014). Sarah's self-awareness, persistence, and willingness to seek out practice opportunities emerged as key factors in her successful language learning journey, highlighting the need for further research on the role of learner personality in relation to code-switching and second language acquisition.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this narrative study provides valuable insights into the complex role of code-switching in second language learning and teaching. Sarah's experiences suggest that code-switching can be a valuable scaffolding tool in the early stages of language acquisition, facilitating comprehension and reducing affective barriers. However, learners should gradually reduce their reliance on code-switching and embrace immersive language experiences to develop greater proficiency and autonomy in the target language. The study also highlights the importance of learner personality and the role of teachers in supporting students' language development through the strategic use of code-switching and other pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, the narrative inquiry approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of Sarah's lived experiences, contributing to the understanding of the interplay between language acquisition, code-switching, and individual learner characteristics.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authenticity

This manuscript is an original work

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies

During the preparation of this work the authors used ChatGPT & Claude in order to format references in APA style, to improve readability and language and to check for grammar, syntax, and organization. The technology was used with human oversight and control. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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