

THE PERKS OF CODE-SWITCHING IN ESL CLASSES

by:

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A good command of English is a must for English language teachers. Good diction with proper pronunciation is a must when language teachers deliver instructions. Despite the idea that it is ideal to use standard pronunciation and correct grammar in an ESL classroom, it is undeniable that sometimes, students would only partially engage in class participation using their second language. Students often try to use their vernacular language to communicate their thoughts. Vernacular language refers to the native language or dialect spoken by the people of a particular region or community. It is the language commonly used in everyday communication among the local population. Vernacular languages vary from region to region and are often distinct from standardized or formal. ESL teachers who observe difficulties among learners during classroom interaction try to use their vernacular language to explain instructions. Thus, the use of Code-Switching.

Code-switching generally refers to switching between two or more languages in a discussion. A study conducted in Malaysia by Ahmad states that code-switching helped learners have fun and pay attention in their ESL classes due to their understanding of the teachers' message. Students perceived that their learning success was related to the teachers' code-switching.

Another study conducted by Pollard proved that students who could freely code-swap within the classroom encountered fewer linguistic hurdles when discussing the topic matters. As a result of the verbal freedom provided by code-switching, learners were better able to share the information they gained with teachers or classmates.

Conversations between students who were not allowed to code switch ineffectively were frequently choppy, and they could not utter words they wanted to express. It supports the idea that although structural grammar teaching is ideal, code-switching can make a big difference.

There are other benefits of code-switching when applied to ESL classes. These are enhanced communications, social integration, creativity and expressiveness, communication efficiency, and more.

Code-switching can allow speakers to convey ideas more precisely by using terms or expressions from a particular language that may not have a direct equivalent in another. It can facilitate communication and interaction among individuals who speak different languages or dialects, fostering a sense of inclusion and community. It can contribute to a speaker's expressive range, allowing them to draw from multiple linguistic resources to convey emotions, attitudes, or nuances more effectively. It can be a more efficient way to communicate, especially when a particular term or concept is more readily available in one language over another. In multilingual societies, individuals who can code-switch effectively may have advantages in accessing job opportunities and navigating diverse professional environments. Lastly, Individuals who code-switch regularly may demonstrate enhanced cognitive abilities related to language processing and executive functions.

While code-switching can have several advantages, it is also essential to be aware of potential disadvantages, depending on the context and the individuals involved. While it can have various benefits, it is also necessary to consider the context and appropriateness of code-switching in different situations. Overreliance on code-switching may hinder the development of solid proficiency in either language. It could limit vocabulary and language skills in both languages. It is important to note that the perception of code-switching can vary across different linguistic and cultural communities.

References:

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