Linguistics

Code-switching in Bilingual Classrooms in Sri Lanka: Differing Perceptions of Teachers and Students

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ABSTRACT

Code-switching occurs in multilingual cultures where citizens have the right and ability to speak two or more languages. This phenomenon can frequently be seen in the English Medium classrooms in the Sri Lankan state school where English and Sinhala are used interchangeably for classroom practices. This article aims to examine subject teachers' and students' perspectives towards the use of English and Sinhala for instruction and learning in English medium classrooms in state schools in Sri Lanka, thus identifying how code-switching impacts on students' performance. The study used mixed method for data collection. Five English medium teachers of three schools in the Hambantota district in Sri Lanka were interviewed and forty students who are learning the subjects in English medium in five schools were distributed questionnaires. The study used random sampling method for selecting the participants and Thematic Analysis (TA) for identifying, organizing, and interpreting data. One key finding of this study is that most teachers employ code-switching in bilingual classrooms in order to make the students familiarize with the subject matter. Although the majority of students are willing to speak English, as a medium of instruction in bilingual classrooms, students need their teachers to explain the lessons in both media. Although code-switching can enhance a student's knowledge of a specific subject it does not make the student a better speaker or a writer. The current study has implications for bilingual teachers, students, syllabus, and material designers.

I. INTRODUCTION

Numerous factors can lead to bilingualism. Members of minority groups typically become bilinguals due to being forced to study both their native language and the language of the majority alongside one another. Simultaneously, bilingualism can emerge whenever a bridging language is mainly spoken in a nation other than the official language. According to Lightbown & Spada (2006), a broad variety of linguistic skills is also referred to as bilingualism. Children who are exposed to many languages in their early years are frequently known as "simultaneous bilinguals". Conversely, "sequential bilinguals" are those who begin learning a second language later in life.

Bilingual Education was first introduced to the Sri Lankan school system in 2001 through the Amity School Project. Given this, English was used as the primary language of instruction for certain chosen subjects from grades sixth to eleven. It is claimed that bilingualism should be developed in secondary schools by using the English language as the medium of teaching and learning in specific fields like science, mathematics, and social sciences, as well as by incorporating computer literacy (Bilingual Education, 2007). This means that, in addition to Tamil and Sinhala, which will continue to be the medium of instruction for some specially selected subject codes, students can gain adequate English language competency by the completion of secondary school education (Bilingual Education, 2007). Apart from the mother tongue and religion, bilingual education has developed to the point that students can now study nine subjects in English.

Notably, the first cohorts of students who received bilingual education completed their General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) exams in 2007.

Given this development, code-switching is increasingly being used in most bilingual classrooms to improve comprehension of explanations and communication. Since Sinhala is the native language in Sri Lanka and English is accepted as a second language, most Sri Lankan students find it challenging to complete their education exclusively in English. Hence, subject teachers are highly likely to use code-switching as a gap filler when educating students in a bilingual classroom. This phenomenon can be mostly seen in the English medium schools in Sri Lanka where English is the least spoken.

It is strongly argued that bilingual education assists second language learners to acquire L2 to a considerable extent. It is unclear, however, to which extent bilingual education can help students in Sri Lanka gain subject-matter knowledge and English language proficiency. Therefore, the aim of this research is to investigate how bilingual education supports students to acquire the English language and why it is that in bilingual settings, teachers and students alternate between speaking the main language and the target language.

The Literature Review

Bilingual Education

The significance of L1 on L2 over academic achievements has been one of the most widely debated findings of research related to bilingual education. The main social convention in history is that a child's native language is the finest medium of instruction for teaching (UNESCO, 1953). Cummins (2000), in examining the history of Bilingual education, exposed the leading observations of bilingualism in the past. These observations validated that bilingual learners poorly performed on oral parts of IQ tests and in classroom work. Critically, numerous researchers concluded that neurological deficits and language impairments alone were the cause of bilingualism. According to the Balancing Effect Assumption, a bilingual child's potential to improve his talents in L2 by deteriorating his talents in L1 is the analytical assertion that recognizes the negative impacts of a second language on a first language. Furthermore, a number of recent research studies have demonstrated that bilingualism can actually

benefit a child's linguistic development and intellectual growth (Cummins, 2000; Baker, 2014; Kangas 2000) if the child's first language is sufficiently established in order to support and increase linguistic achievements in their second language (Cummins, 2000). Similarly, according to Cummins' (2000) Theory of Developmental Interdependence, a well-established first language is required for optimal development in a non-native language. This perspective is particularly relevant to bilingual education in Sri Lanka since the bilingual policy approach was created in Sri Lanka in response to the country's unique sociocultural, economical, and cognitive needs.

In Sri Lanka, bilingual education can be considered a long-term strategy for preserving the mother tongue of the country while simultaneously promoting the importance of English, the link language. In other words, in the Sri Lankan setting, the first language remains the dominant language, on the other hand, the second language develops gradually since it is a foreign language. There is strong evidence in the literature to claim that bilingual students are increasingly attempting to enrich their second language proficiency, and thereby improving their academic achievements.

Code-switching and its Benefits

Code-switching is a method of multilingual communication in which two or more languages are spoken simultaneously. This phenomenon was first recognized by Haugen (1956), who described code-switching as the alternative utilization of two languages in conversations. According to Bokamba (1989), code-switching is the mixing of phrases, words from two different verb conjugation processes within individual sentences during a communication exchange. Similarly, Angell et al., (1995) defined code-switching as the interchange of two languages inside a single expression, phrase, or element. According to Crystal (2015), language or code-switching occurs whenever a bilingual speaker alternates between two languages during a conversation with another language learner (Crystal, 2000). Hymes (1974) describes code-switching as a popular term for the additional utilization of different languages, variants of a language and even styles of speech. Conveying a similar viewpoint, Bruss and Grumperz (1986) characterize interactive code-switching simply as the conjunction of sequences of conversation

between these linguistic systems in the same verbal exchange. The exchange, as per their findings, takes the shape of two successive phrases in which the speaker uses a second language to reaffirm his or her argument to respond to another's comment. Factors such as disparities in language behavior between personal conversations, socioeconomic classes, and cultural backgrounds are important in the interpretation of code-switching.

Previous studies have examined the criteria that can be used to choose codes in a particular situation (Wardhaugh, 2006). Accordingly, aspects such as adaptations to listeners, cooperation, content selection, and projected sociocultural gap mostly impact on the specific code generator. According to Haugen (1956), changing the languages can be triggered by a variety of factors, including the shift in the subject, a fresh referent or territory that necessitates the use of one dialect over another, or the presenter's own needs. By adopting code-switching between the mother language and the non-native language, students' focus is drawn to newfound information about switching scenarios. This environment aids in building a connection between L1 and L2. As Cole (1998) argues, a teacher might harm a student's first language experience to boost their knowledge of a second language. This means that in order to enhance a person's second language, teachers should not entirely ignore students' first language. As indicated by previous studies, bilingual education can strongly support students' second language enhancement. If this is the case, it is important to identify how it facilitates bilingual students in Sri Lanka.

Code-mixing

Code-mixing is another phenomenon that is strongly connected to code-switching. Code-mixing occurs when two languages are used simultaneously to the point that they switch back and forth in the course of a single word (Wardhaugh, 1986, 2006). For Hudson (1996), code-mixing is a kind of linguistic cocktail, using a few words from one language, a few from the other, a few from the first again, and so on. The term code-mixing refers to a more generic type of usage that can include situations of code-switching as well as other forms of usage that stress lexical components. As reported by linguists, this phenomenon can be largely seen in bilingual education. For instance, in Sri Lanka, when students communicate in English in bilingual classrooms, they are highly likely to blend Sinhala if they come across an unknown word in English.

Differing Perceptions of Code-switching

The value of code-switching in the bilingual classroom has been uncovered by many studies. As researchers argue, both students and teachers employ code-switching for a variety of purposes thus, it has become an inevitable phenomenon in the language classroom context (Duff & Polio, 1990). These researchers include proponents of target language exclusivity inside the school environment. Critically, although code-switching has developed considerably in recent years exclusive usage of the target language in English medium classrooms seems to be a much-debated topic. According to Levine (2003), the notion of an exclusive target language usage could restrict what could be achieved through the curriculum. Similarly, Cook (2001) claims that target language exclusivity within the school curriculum severely restricts the opportunities for language education. Others who advocate for a mono approach to the medium of language instruction argue that the use of the first language within the classroom curriculum does have a negative effect on target language development thus, code-switching must be minimized and avoided within the classroom. They presented diverse perceptions that demonstrate in what ways the usage of a first language can unfavorably impact on the target language acquisition process. Most researchers argue that given the restricted access to comprehensible input in the natural environment, engaging students in the target language in the classroom is a more effective strategy to teach them the language. For instance, Duff and Polio (1990) emphasize that as a "slight possibility of engagement occurs" (p. 154) outside of the classroom context, the quality and quantity of input that second language learners receive in the classroom is important for learning and performing.

On the contrary, those who support the inclusion of first languages in the curriculum view students' first languages as assets rather than barriers. This means that limiting the learner's use of their native language is not only unreasonable, but it also ignores the fact that their first language is already known to be a valuable tool for cognition, a method for enhancing the quality of the information, and an additional source in bilingual settings. If this is really the case, it is significant to investigate why bilingual settings need teachers and students to switch between speaking the native language and the target language and how bilingual

education helps students acquisition of the English language.

Translanguaging

Translanguaging is a strategy that is growing rapidly in educational settings around the world (Hornberger & Link, 2012). Translanguaging, according to Baker (2011), is the method of "creating meaning, molding experiences, increasing awareness, and learning by the usage of two languages" (p. 288). Broadly speaking,

Translanguaging is transformative in nature; it creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, beliefs and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance and makes it into a lived experience. (Wei, 2011, p. 1223)

This means that translanguaging can effectively be applied to the classroom practices of second language learners. Additionally, students engage in translanguaging as a technique to explore, compare, and justify the chosen phrasings which help open exploratory spaces to investigate numerous elements and enhance cognitive and linguistic knowledge. Moreover, by utilizing translanguaging techniques students can study in novel ways they had planned with their peers which can result in transformational spaces and enlarged learning domains.

Gort and Sembiante (2015) reveal how instructors' language procedures motivate emergent bilingual students' progress in formal and structured ways, classroom language appearances, and enable the co-construction of dialectical spaces that allow students and teachers to participate in language teaching using translanguaging teaching methods and ecology of the linguistic framework (Gort & Sembiante, 2015). This means that translanguaging has the capacity to assist students to gain a better comprehension of the material being taught, as well as boost school-home contact and improve the learning outcomes of students.

To describe a teaching approach used in a secondary school in Welsh, Williams (2002) invented the term "Trawsieithu" (p. 20). This method entails switching between two languages in a methodical manner so that students acquire knowledge in one language and perform classroom activities in the other language. This phenomenon can largely be observed in the bilingual classrooms in Sri Lankan schools.

II. METHODOLOGY

Context and Participants

Participants in this study included both teachers (5) and students (40), and they were all from the leading schools in the Hambantota district of Sri Lanka. Of the three male and two female teachers who participated in the interviews, two teach English in the bilingual classroom while four teachers teach History, Science and Mathematics in English medium. All were well-experienced practitioners, and three teachers were graduates whereas the other two were Diploma holders of the National Colleges of Education in Sri Lanka. The students for the study were randomly selected from grades 10 and 11. Twenty-five female and fifteen male students were taken as the sample and their mother tongue was Sinhala. Hence, they all communicate in Sinhala when they spend time with their families.

Research Design

The current study is qualitative and quantitative in nature. Conversely, the purpose of this study does not necessarily provide a numerical analysis as to how much first language is being used within the classroom, but rather to determine the situations and factors that led teachers to decide to code switch between first language and second language in the classroom. The study also focused on the student's attitudes towards code-switching within the learning environment. To collect data, the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative data from five bilingual classroom teachers from three schools in the Hambantota district and forty students who are following bilingual education from five schools.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Collection

Quantitative research methodologies can bring greater structure to any research, thus it can maximize the success of the problem the researcher is attempting to investigate and answer. Questionnaires and surveys are mostly used in quantitative research, and data is collected using specified instruments to provide the statistical analysis (Creswell, 2003 & Williams, 2011). In particular, questionnaires can provide a snapshot of current circumstances at a specific moment in time, they can effectively be administered to acquire data on pre-specified time-related factors. Due to this background, the current study has also used a questionnaire in order to determine to which extent the first language is used to facilitate teaching in

the bilingual classroom and to examine students' perspectives of code-switching when the teacher explains in both Sinhala and English in a bilingual context.

Qualitative interviews, on the other hand, can provide a new perspective on a complicated topic (Folkestad, 2008). The researcher can conduct the interview in a way that may lead the conversation in unexpected directions (Abeywickrama & Thasneen 2022), or encourage participants to provide more detailed responses in order to understand the reasons behind such reactions (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000; Cohen & Manion, 1994) because compared to other methods of data collecting, this instrument provides for more flexible and in-depth questioning (Burns, 2000; Cohen & Manion, 1994; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; Zacharias, 2012). Given this background, the researcher can explore the phenomenon more analytically and clear any misconceptions. The method that tends to be "most favoured by educational researchers" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 157) is semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions because they can generate detailed information that enables precise quotations from subjects, "allowing them to report their opinions, feelings, and personal knowledge acquired from participants" (Zadrozny et al., 2016, p. 220). The semi-structured interview used for the current study was designed to explore teachers' perceptions of code-switching in the bilingual classroom and to identify what instances and for what purposes they code-switch in the classroom.

Data Analysis

Since qualitative research has potential to "move from concrete to abstract" (Lichtman, 2013, p. 19) without depending on prior hypotheses recognizing the key themes that appear from the data is crucial to maximizing the validity of the study (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Thematic Analysis (TA) being a broad technique, enables researchers to find multiple cross-references between data and study themes (Ibrahim, 2012). As a result, the inductive method of TA has extensively been used frequently in the qualitative paradigm to find patterns in the information acquired through interviews and, to respond to the research questions of investigations (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ibrahim, 2012; Jugder, 2016; Yukhymenko, Brown, Lawless, Brodowinska, & Mullin, 2014). Most importantly, TA can adapt to a wide range of interview formats, and sample sizes. Over the past ten years, TA has been widely used in educational research

(Coldwell, 2017; Crowe, Inder, & Porter, 2015; Liyanage & Bartlett, 2010; Skinner et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2015; Tuckett, 2005; Abeywickrama & Dissanayake, 2022).

As such, this study also employed TA for arranging, analysing and interpreting data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), TA involves six steps: "a) Familiarizing with data; examine the data and note down important points, b) generating initial codes by collecting data required for each code, c) searching for themes; observe codes by potential themes, d) reviewing themes to check whether the themes work based on coded extracts and produce a thematic map, e) defining and naming themes to produce clear definitions and names for each theme, and f) producing the report with analysis" (p.16) extracting valid perceptions from the participants' transcriptions that relate to the research questions. In the process of examining qualitative data via TA, recurring patterns in data collection were observed for, understood, and reported. It is the way for data description, but it also includes interpretations in the selection of codes and the creation of themes.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The key aim of the current study is to discover teachers' perceptions of code-switching and to identify whether teachers code-switch for any compelling reasons; in what situations teachers code-switch and why they code-switch when explaining lessons in a bilingual classroom.

Teachers' Conflicting Perceptions of Code-switching

A similar perception of code-switching when instructing in a bilingual classroom was reported by participants. Notably, this phenomenon was largely seen during the first phase of the interview. As they argue, lessons taught in English medium do not necessarily require explanation in Sinhala. As such, teachers prevent children from speaking in Sinhala during class time, for instance, Participant T3 revealed,

Our target language is English, and with that in my mind, I often ask my students to speak only in English every day when I enter the classroom. Code-switching is important when explaining a subject like Sri Lankan History, however, students should be encouraged to learn the content in English without any explanation in Sinhala, which is our responsibility.

Similarly, for Participant T1, the only language accepted during her teaching sessions is English, thus, *"some students in the class find it challenging when she only explains in English, but students try their best to interact with me in English, however, they are allowed to speak in Sinhala if they really do not understand"*. Although many participants perceived code-switching in a bilingual classroom as a negative practice, they gradually realized the value of using Sinhala for enhancing student engagement and interaction as in the case of Participant T5,

> *A second language makes it more difficult for us to communicate than in a first language. I frequently find it challenging to use English because it is not my native tongue. In fact, it is not the native language of the students too.*

Participant 4 showed a stronger preference for code-switching, and she explained broadly why bilingual teachers should do so throughout their teaching sessions. She explicitly mentioned the cultural impact on learning in bilingual classrooms and the underlying social reasons for code-switching. Surprisingly, Participants T1 and T2 did not alter their perspectives throughout the interview. They strongly believe that code-switching should not take place in English medium classrooms. Conversely, they did not specifically state that they do not use Sinhala for classroom practices. In contrast, they advised against code-switching in bilingual classrooms.

As indicated previously, the responses provided by some teachers demonstrate that they have no willingness to use L1 in a bilingual classroom. Although code-switching in an English-medium classroom is encouraged by Vygotsky's Theory of Social-Cultural Learning because it can optimize student interaction and engagement, many teachers continuously use English-only policy for classroom teaching and learning based on their own conceptions and beliefs without any specific theories of teaching and learning or research-based approach (Lightbrown & Spada 2006).

Motives for Code-switching in a Bilingual Context

Participants reported their perceptions on why and in what instances they code-switch within the classroom. As they demonstrated, code-switching mostly depends on *"the subject they teach"* (Participant T4), and the *"cognition level of the students"* (Participant T3). On the other hand, code-switching also occurs when teachers are attempting to make the lesson more understandable to their students by optimizing their engagement (Participant T2), for instance, ESL practitioners are highly likely to code-switch if the students really needed an explanation during a grammar lesson, particularly, when students found new terminology in their lessons. In addition, English medium teachers very often change their codes because those subjects are more explainable in their mother tongue. This means that students can gain a thorough understanding of the concepts and theories they are learning through their mother tongue, as in the case of Participant T5 who teaches History as a subject that encompasses both Sri Lankan and world history, *"as most stories are related to ancient kingdoms, it makes easy for students to understand the context when I code switch while explaining"* This argument is strongly supported by previous studies. For instance, as Heugh claims (2009), teachers purposely chose local words to assure pupils' cognitive development.

It is important to note that Participant T3, who teaches History as a subject for the students at the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) reported another significant reason for code-switching. As those students sit for a competitive examination at the end of the year teacher's key focus is to explain the content of the subject in any language that the students can understand. She further claims*, although English is the medium of instruction if they have some English knowledge, they can answer the questions in the paper"*. Given this background, teachers tend to code-switch between languages.

Although many participants reported valuable reasons for code-switching this does not necessarily mean that all respondents strongly support these perspectives. As they argue, in comparison with students who pursue Sinhala medium education, the aim of bilingual education is to produce students with good oral and written communication skills. Hence, as demonstrated by Participant 5, students are not permitted to ask questions in Sinhala. *In my classroom, sometimes students ask me questions in Sinhala. In that case, I ask the same question in English. By doing so, I encourage them to speak in English as they could.* However, sometimes, her perspectives are self-contradictory*, when I exclusively instruct the students in English, I am unable to be who I truly am. I want to say that when my mother tongue is not used, I feel like acting* (Participant T5).

As observed, teachers were unwilling to express their real conceptions at the beginning of the interview, and they attempted to indicate that they do not employ code-switching in the classroom. However, gradually, they were highly motivated to report the constructive aspects of code-switching when the subject was explored in depth to elicit the true concepts of code-switching. Then it became clear that most teachers used it when they were teaching and that they also thought it served a purpose and was an effective tool in bilingual classrooms. It seemed that participants are unique as individuals, thus they cannot compare one teacher's method of code-switching to another teacher's way of explaining the lessons. They all attempt to educate their students in various ways, and they all code-switch within the classroom to a considerable extent. As Participant T1 demonstrates, the students are aware of the importance of the target language, hence they at least attempt to communicate in English. This means that in a bilingual classroom, there may be a substantial correlation between teachers' use of English and students' motivation to speak their second language (Duff & Polio, 1990).

The Preferred Medium of Instruction

As indicated previously, the current study has also used quantitative data, to determine the degree to which the code-switching is employed by teachers to enhance student engagement and interaction in the bilingual classroom and to explore students' perceptions of code-switching in a bilingual context.
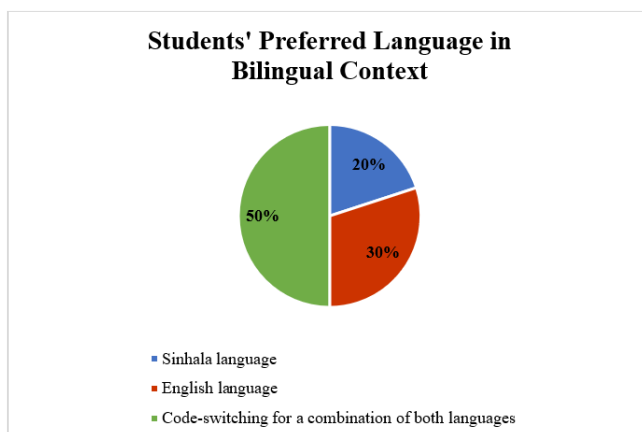

Figure 1- Students' Preferred Language in Bilingual Context

As illustrated in Figure 1, it is important to note that the highest percentage of the students preferred their teacher to explain the subject matters, concepts, and theories, in both Sinhala and English. Sinhala received the lowest preference from the students, and 30% of them indicated that they preferred the teacher to instruct them only in English.

In addition to the language of instruction, it was also investigated whether students can understand the content of the lesson when it is entirely taught in English medium. The results demonstrate that the same percentage of students who indicated that they preferred "only in English" previously also reported that they can comprehend the concepts and theories when the teacher explains the lessons in English (see Figure 2). Conversely, 70% of the students reported their inability to understand the lessons which are delivered in English.
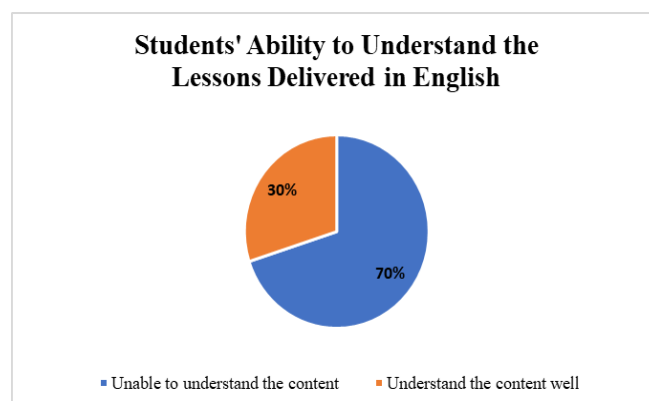

Figure 2- Student's Ability to Understand the Lessons Delivered in English

Most students were in favor of code-switching in their learning as seen in Figure 3. Notably, 30% of students reported that using Sinhala and English interchangeably to illustrate concepts in class was their least favored method. Many comments support the idea that code-switching in a bilingual classroom can enhance students' knowledge to a significant extent.
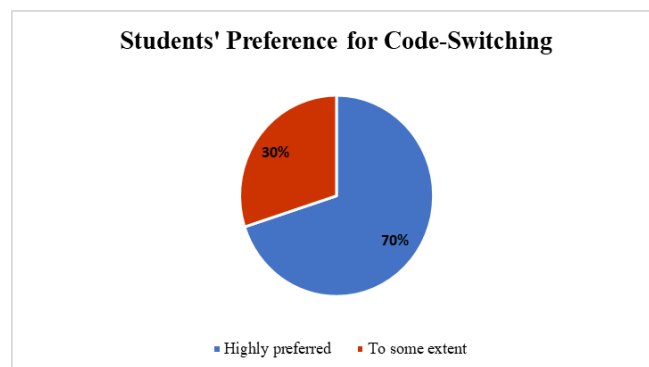

Figure 3- Students' Preference for Code-Switching

All students have responded to English

as their preferred language in communication with teachers and peers. Many responses reveal that students have a strong willingness to speak fluently in English, however, the achievement of this result has been hindered by teachers' code-switching in the classroom. This perspective is reflected in the comments of students, for instance, Participant S4 emphasized that "*My mother tongue is Sinhala, but I like to learn English more than my mother language. Although code-switching helps me understand subjects, I learn better, my oral communication skills cannot be enhanced* through that." Moreover, as students claim, code-switching can "*support them to understand the difficult concepts and theories well*" (Participant S6), and they can "*find Sinhala meanings for the newly found words in the subjects*" (Participant S2). These responses indicate that there is a correlation between students' and teachers' responses in terms of code-switching.

The findings of the study indicate that students need to speak English proficiently, but because it is also the language least used in their families, they also require their teachers to explain lessons in both Sinhala and English. Teachers, on the other hand, frequently encourage their students to pose questions in a language they are comfortable with or in English, even if their utterances are grammatically incorrect. Most importantly, for teachers, code swapping can establish a conducive teaching and learning atmosphere in the classroom, specifically, while students are preparing for the examinations. In general, as most teachers employ code-switching as a tool and assistance for students' learning processes, all the teachers who participated in this study are more inclined to agree with this. As Cook (2001) claims, code-switching is an essential tool for both students and teachers when teaching and learning a target language According to Nanayakkara (2017), the new bilingual teaching strategies, which involve the usage of mixed languages: Sinhala and English, enable greater acquisition of the English language and overall higher academic performance. This validates that since the implementation of the bilingual system in Sri Lanka, students have been able to acquire new knowledge as well as bilingual teachers have been able to effectively undertake classroom practices.

Overall, it is evident that most students have preferred to learn in a bilingual classroom using both English and Sinhala. Although teachers emphasized that they are increasingly attempting to prevent code-switching, students' responses demonstrate that it is impossible to entirely exclude it from the teaching and learning process. Additionally, these results demonstrate that code-switching benefits bilingual education's teaching and learning processes.

IV. CONCLUSION

The key objectives of this study are to investigate, in what instances and why teachers tend to code-switch in the English medium classroom and to identify teachers' and students' perceptions of code-switching. The findings of the study demonstrate that most teachers code-switch in the classroom with the specific purpose of assisting students in understanding the content of the subjects. Thus, most students are in favor of code-switching. Similarly, students' perspectives also revealed that code-switching makes them understand the essence of the subject matter and the content becomes clearer when the teacher explains in both English and Sinhala languages. The findings of the study concluded that students prefer a combination of both Sinhala and English languages in their learning process. However, none of the teachers inquired the students about their preferred language in various contexts of explaining the lesson. Although expertise within the teaching career is a valuable tool for teachers, it is evident that much can be gained by probing and observing the consent of the students in what instances they like their teacher to code switch within the teaching process. Examining students' feedback into consideration is essential when the teacher intends to use code-switching in the classroom. With the findings of the study, it can be concluded that both teachers and students have identified positive impacts of code-switching in the bilingual classroom. Most importantly, code-switching does not occur in the process of teaching consciously, therefore it can be concluded, based on the bilingual teachers 'experience in the field of teaching, mostly code-switching takes place in the classroom involuntarily.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Participants in this study included only five teachers and forty students, and the data were gathered from the schools in the Hambantota district of Sri Lanka. However, if the sample had consisted of more participants and had been taken from a few other schools in other districts, the results

would have been generalized. The findings of the present study noticeably demonstrated the need for research in some key areas that the researchers are least focused on. A study should be carried out on how to improve English-speaking fluency in the bilingual classroom. Moreover, a study based on how to minimize code-switching for a productive learning environment can be observed further. Most importantly, perspectives towards code-switching in Tamil schools that offer bilingual education can be examined and a researcher can compare the Sinhala - English bilingual classroom and Tamil-English classroom. Bilingual classroom can be observed during the course of this research. As a result, it will add additional context to the study because it allows the researcher to observe both the teaching methods and the behaviors of students. Another research can be focused on the reliability and applicability of the existing English medium textbooks and materials in improving students' English knowledge in writing and speaking.

Implications of the Study

This study has implications for bilingual teachers, students, syllabus, and material designers. As the current study mainly observes the students' perspectives, teachers can gain a prior understanding of how to teach in bilingual sections in the way students prefer. Furthermore, the findings support material designers to perceive students' perspectives of the language and how they should prepare materials with simple and understandable English. For researchers who are interested in investigating bilingual education and code-switching, this article provides an in-depth analysis of the perspectives of code-switching and what instances and the reasons for code-switching in the bilingual classroom.

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