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A Self-Study on the Effects of Using Code-Switching on Students' L2 Speaking Anxiety in the EFL classroom

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By

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I may not have gone where I intended to go,

but I think I have ended up where I needed to be.

— Douglas Adams

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Contents

Abstract

Among the various obstacles learners of a foreign language may have to face, speaking anxiety is one of the most common. This self-study research investigates the relationship between the speaking anxiety of young language learners of English in Chile and the teacher's use of the students' native language (L1) in the form of code-switching as a means of reducing this anxiety. It also explores the author's personal beliefs about code-switching and how they have developed over the years of studying EFL pedagogy. This research was conducted with a qualitative method. To answer the research question, three personal journals, two classroom observations and one questionnaire responded by a group of 7th grade English students at a private school in Chile were analysed. The analysis showed that various students felt anxious when they were forced to speak English in class and that an extensive use of English by the teacher could also lead to some students losing the connection with the lessons. It also showed that students felt more comfortable when both they and the teacher used the L1 more frequently, but this increased the risk of not using English in the English lesson at all. It was concluded that a correlation between the use of code-switching and language anxiety existed and that teachers should take this into consideration when teaching a foreign language. The research was limited by the short amount of time available for its conduction and the few data that could be collected.

Keywords: foreign language anxiety, speaking anxiety, code-switching, young learners, self-study

Resumen

Entre los diversos obstáculos a los que se enfrentan los estudiantes de una lengua extranjera, la ansiedad al hablar es uno de los más comunes. Este autoestudio investiga la relación entre la ansiedad al hablar de los jóvenes estudiantes de inglés en Chile y el uso de la lengua materna de los estudiantes (L1) por parte del profesor en forma de cambio de código como medio para reducir esta ansiedad. También explora las creencias personales del autor sobre el cambio de código y cómo se han desarrollado a lo largo de los años de estudio de la pedagogía en inglés como lengua extranjera. Esta investigación se llevó a cabo con un método cualitativo. Para responder a la pregunta de investigación, se analizaron tres diarios personales, dos observaciones de clase y un cuestionario respondido por un grupo de alumnos de inglés de 7º básico de un colegio privado en Chile. El análisis mostró que varios alumnos se sentían ansiosos cuando se les obligaba a hablar inglés en clase y que un uso extensivo del inglés por parte del profesor también podía hacer que algunos alumnos perdieran la conexión con las clases. También mostró que los estudiantes se sentían más cómodos cuando tanto ellos como el profesor utilizaban la L1 con más frecuencia, pero esto aumentaba el riesgo de no utilizar el inglés en la clase de inglés en absoluto. Se llegó a la conclusión de que existía una correlación entre el uso del cambio de código y la ansiedad lingüística y que los profesores deberían tenerlo en cuenta a la hora de enseñar una lengua extranjera. La investigación se vio limitada por el escaso tiempo disponible para su realización y los pocos datos que pudieron recogerse.

Palabras clave: ansiedad lingüística, ansiedad al hablar, cambio de código, estudiantes jóvenes, autoestudio.

Introduction

The following study explores the question of whether and to what extent it is suitable for me to use code-switching in my English lessons to minimise my students' speaking anxiety. This self-study focuses on the following aspects: First, I want to understand whether speaking anxiety occurs in my students and how it manifests itself. Furthermore, it is about how my personal attitude towards the use of the L1 in the English classroom influences communication and the possible presence of speaking anxiety in the classroom. Finally, the results of the data analysis will be used to design a plan for my personal and professional development.

Learners of a foreign language may have to face various difficulties during their learning process, such as lack of motivation, or no opportunities of being exposed to the target language in their daily lives. Among the long list of obstacles, language anxiety is possibly one of the biggest impediments (von Wörde, 2003). Language anxiety can appear at each level of the learning process, from the early stages of beginning language acquisition to language production (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). It can also affect all four language learning skills, but it is most noticeable in productive skills, especially in speaking (Horwitz et al., 1986). When students are asked to speak in front of the class in the target language, they may experience unpleasant feelings. Physical reactions, such as an increased heartbeat or cold hands, or psychological reactions, like nervousness or decreased self-esteem can be signs of speaking anxiety (Szyszka, 2017). Although this phenomenon is widely investigated in research (e.g., Aida, 1994; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991), not many students and teachers are aware of its existence or the connection of language learning and anxiety (Tsiplakides, 2009; von Wörde, 2003). Studies (Ali Rezaee & Fathi, 2021; Maleki & Varzandeh, 2016) have shown that one possible tool to decrease the effects of language anxiety in the EFL classroom is the use of code-

switching, i.e., switching between the target language and the students' native language in a conversation or a classroom situation (Bailey, 2011).

The role of using the students' native language (L1) in the foreign language classroom has undergone some radical changes over the course of the past 120 years (Cook, 2003). Until the end of the 19th century, it was frequently used as an important tool with the Grammar-Translation method (Bruen & Kelly, 2014; Cook, 2003). With reforms of language teaching methods from that time on, the use of the L1 became less popular, or was even frowned upon completely, as in the Direct Method or the Natural Approach (Cook, 2003; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The Direct Method was developed in the first half of the 20th century when the growing globalisation and its concomitants like migration, international business, and tourism required a new form of language teaching (Cook, 2003). Often, students with different native languages shared the same classroom, making it difficult to resort to a common first language for instructions, thus, the Direct Method prohibited the use of the L1 and made the exclusive use of the target language in the classroom obligatory (Cook, 2003). The Natural Approach, developed in the 1970s and 1980s, also relied exclusively on the target language to simulate situations in which the students were being exposed to the target language in the same way in which they acquired their first language (Cook, 2003; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Similarly, the main idea of the now predominantly used Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT) is to learn a language for communicative purposes by relying almost exclusively on the use of the L2, without resorting to the L1 as an aid (Bruen & Kelly, 2014).

In Chile, English as a foreign language is taught as a compulsory subject from 5th grade onward (Ministry of Education [Mineduc], Decree N° 2960, 2012). The results of the 2017 national assessment of educational quality (SIMCE) have shown that 68% of the students finish

11th grade only with A1 level or below of the Central European Framework of Reference for Languages CEFR (Agencia de Calidad, 2017; Council of Europe, 2022). To raise the students' level of English, the teaching methods have been reformed. The Chilean EFL classroom adopted general ideas of the CLT approach, supplemented by some elements of the task-based learning approach (Mineduc, 2015). One of the main aspects is now, in theory, that the English lessons should be focused on communication and interaction among students in the target language without recourse to the L1, as stated by Mineduc (2015) in the *Bases Curriculares*.

Motivation

The issue of speaking anxiety and how to decrease its effects is of personal interest for me, both for private and professional reasons. As a non-native speaker of Spanish in Chile, who has learned Spanish as a third language autodidactically, I had to face many situations in which I experienced various forms of speaking anxiety first-hand. However, I appreciated the opportunity of being exposed to my target language every day. After learning about CLT and creating target language only situations in EFL classes, I found the Chilean approach of using CLT and teaching English in English to be most beneficial for the students. Most of them have almost no opportunity to be exposed to the target language outside the classroom. However, when I started my practicum in the 4th year of my degree, I saw the gap between theory and reality. At my first practicum school, a public school with a socioeconomic vulnerability rate of over 90%, the English lessons were conducted almost entirely in Spanish. Whenever the teacher used English, the students did not understand them. The students also participated exclusively in Spanish. My second practicum school, where I conducted this research, was a private Catholic school located in Santiago Centre with a different socioeconomic background. I taught a 7th grade of 30 male students with four lessons of 40 minutes each per week. Every lesson, they

were divided into two groups of 15 students each. Alternately, one group stayed in the classroom, the other group had their lesson in the computer lab. Since it is part of the school's methodology, their regular English teacher conducted the lessons in English, without recourse to Spanish. However, the students frequently replied in Spanish or not at all if their teacher insisted on an answer in English. I observed the same behaviour when I took over the class. I talked to the students in English only. Often, they did not understand me, or they got visibly anxious whenever I addressed them individually. In most cases, they switched immediately to Spanish when answering. Communication among the students also occurred exclusively in Spanish. I started to use more Spanish for instructions and explanations in my lessons until Spanish became the dominant language. Although student participation increased slightly, less English was used in every lesson. Based on these observations, I conducted this research to figure out to what extent my perception of the use of L1 in my EFL classrooms had changed, and if code-switching may be a useful tool for me to reduce students' speaking anxiety without giving the English class entirely in Spanish.

Rationale

Language anxiety is considered one of the most influential and challenging factors of language learning (Vaccarina, 2019). Up to 50% of all foreign language learners suffer language anxiety, making it also a very common phenomenon among foreign language learners (von Wörde, 2003). The use of L1 may be an appropriate tool to reduce language anxiety (Bruen & Kelly, 2014). However, as of today, the use of L1 in the EFL classroom in its different forms (predominant use of L1, code-switching, translanguaging) is a largely debated issue. In the Chilean EFL classroom, using CLT and teaching English in English without reaching back to Spanish has been implemented recently as the main theory (Mineduc, 2015). With this self-study

research, I want to investigate the effects of the use of code-switching as a teaching practice tool to present instructions, and for communication with my students, as well as its effect on their speaking anxiety depending on the amount of L1 I use in the classroom. The results of this research may, on the one hand, serve as a foundation for further research on this topic to improve the level of English among Chilean students. On the other hand, they should help me to develop a plan to improve my own teaching practice by better understanding the importance of either making use of L1 (and to what extent) or not using it at all in my EFL classrooms.

Literature Review

This chapter presents the key literature of this self-study research. In the following, key concepts, relevant research, and definitions regarding the discussion of using L1 in the foreign language classroom, foreign language anxiety, and the use of code-switching in relation with language anxiety will be presented.

Use of L1 in the Foreign Language Classroom

The question of whether or not a foreign language should be taught only in the target language is a matter of wide debate in the literature. With the European reform movement of Viëtor, Passy, and Jespersen at the end of the 19th century, the methodology of teaching a foreign language shifted from the classical grammar-translation method to methods that were more focused on communication and meaning rather than form (Laviosa, 2020). Throughout the 20th century until today, various methods, such as direct method, natural approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1998), and CLT derived from the initial reform movement, putting more emphasis on the target language by avoiding the L1 as much as possible (Bruen & Kelly, 2014). In their natural approach, Krashen and Terrell (1998) compared language learning with the first language

acquisition of young children, emphasising the need for large quantities of L2 input for the learner to develop a language repertoire that would allow them to produce the language by themselves. Ellis (2008) took up on the same idea and added the necessity of opportunities for L2 output as another important aspect. However, in both approaches, the L1 is not applied beyond negligible quantities. And Crichton (2009) promoted the use of the target language to foster communication within the classroom, but added that teachers would have to adjust their L2 use as soon as the students no longer understand the teacher's instructions.

In contrast to those representatives of a strictly limited use of the L1 in language teaching are authors who contest the alleged necessity of monolingual foreign language classrooms. Atkinson (1987) pointed out that neglecting the L1 may lead to missed opportunities to the detriment of the learners, while at the same time, he warned against overusing it. In a small study with six student teachers, Macaro (2001) concluded that the amount of L1 used by the teacher does not affect the quantity of native or target language used by the students. Brooks and Donato (1994) even argued that the use of L1 could have a positive impact on the students' engagement to tasks which would eventually make them more meaningful than tasks being done only in the target language. Bruen and Kelly (2014) argued, based on the idea of "the language learner as a plurilingual individual" (p. 3) developed by Breidbach (2003), that a radical limitation on the target language only would be contradictory to the idea of interacting languages within the learners. This idea follows the same line of linguistic interdependence presented by Cummins (1979). The author argued that a high proficiency level in the L1 would have a facilitating effect on the L2 learning process, and vice versa. Chamberlain-Quinlisk and Senyshyn (2012) developed further on this idea and stated that concepts learned and understood in one language would not have to be learned again in the other one, only their name would have to be learned.

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

Various studies have been conducted over the past decades regarding the mostly negative effects of foreign language anxiety (e.g., Aida, 1994; Gardner et al., 1997; Horwitz et al., 1986; Mak, 2011; Scovel, 1978). Horwitz et al. (1986) defined anxiety as "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (p. 125). If this reaction appears in certain situations, e.g., during speaking exercises in the foreign language class, it is classified as situational or situation-specific anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre et al., 1998). As MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) explained, language anxiety has a huge impact on the learner's performance and progress since it can affect all stages of learning, language acquisition, consolidation of language knowledge, and language production. Young (1991) identified six different factors that can be causative for foreign language anxiety, including the learner's and teacher's beliefs about language learning, teacher-learner interactions, and classroom routines. Parts of these factors are associated with low self-esteem and competitiveness, which can lead to anxiety when learners compare themselves to others, especially more proficient students (Young, 1991). Occhipinti (2009) pointed out that competitiveness can cause a chain reaction. The learner's doubt of their own preparedness when observing others can provoke a negative attitude toward the exercise by over-thinking a possible negative performance. In their study of speaking in class anxiety among Chinese ESL learners, Mak (2011) found that a learner's negative attitude toward the language can affect the level of language anxiety. Similar to competitiveness, a negative self-evaluation can raise the level of anxiety which can result in a low performance, bad grades and, consequently, in a more negative attitude toward the language. Vaccarini (2019) described this effect as the "disparity between the 'true self' and the 'limited self'" (p. 28). In their investigation among Italian school and

university students, they also confirmed that speaking is the skill that provokes the highest level of anxiety and that students feel more anxious when they have to speak to the teacher than to their classmates. This effect is increased if the teacher is a native speaker of the target language (Vaccarini, 2019). These findings are in line with Szyszka (2017), who added that the fear of an imperfect pronunciation can increase the communication apprehension, i.e., the "anxiety or fear a learner experiences while interacting in a foreign language" (p. 66).

Code-Switching in Relation with FLA

Code-switching is defined by Bailey (2011) as the use of more than one language within a conversation. The definition by Gross (2006) is even more detailed, who defined code-switching as the "back and forth between languages (or varieties of the same language), sometimes within the same utterance" (p. 508). It was assumed that the use of code-switching strategies in the EFL class may have a decreasing effect on students' speaking anxiety. Maleki and Varanzadeh (2016) found a direct relation between code-switching and reduced speaking anxiety among Iranian young adult language institution students. In their study, the use of code-switching as language class strategy resulted in a decreased level of language anxiety. This result was confirmed by a study of Ali Rezaee and Fathi (2021), who could also find lower levels of language anxiety when code-switching was used in the class. After conducting their research, Bruen and Kelly (2014) suggested that an effective integration of L1 can lower both the students' cognitive overload and language anxiety. Beside the academic reasons in favour of the use of code-switching presented by the authors, Demir Ayaz (2017) explained that affective reasons may be an argument for the use of code-switching. By addressing the students in their native language, teachers can show empathy or motivate the students.

Research Question

With the context and the personal motivation of the research being presented, and the literature on the topics of L1 use in the EFL classroom, speaking anxiety, and the effect of code-switching on language anxiety being reviewed, this self-study will focus on answering the following research question:

How can the use of the L1 in the form of code-switching help me to reduce speaking anxiety among my 7th grade students in the EFL classroom?

Methodology

The following chapter describes the methodology used for this self-study, explaining and justifying the use of the data collection tools and the instruments used for the data analysis to understand the research question.

Research Methodology

This research was conducted in the form of a self-study. The focus of this research is on understanding my ideas regarding the use of my students' L1 in the classroom, and how it might affect my students' speaking anxiety in particular classroom situations. By conducting self-study research, I had the opportunity to observe and scrutinise myself as a teacher, and to analyse possible discrepancies between my beliefs and actual classroom practice (Samaras, 2011). The outcomes of this research should then allow me to develop plans and strategies which I can apply to my teaching practice to decrease possible negative effects of my students' speaking anxiety. Further, this self-study used a qualitative approach to analyse my teaching practice. This research aimed at analysing my personal beliefs and how they affect my teaching practice and my students. Rather than obtaining statistical results and numerical information, I wanted to get a

personal understanding of how and why my beliefs are the way they are and what this means for my teaching practice. For that reason, creating a study based on numerical data, as used in quantitative research, was ruled out from the outset, and so was the quantitative approach. Qualitative research, on the other hand, allows the researcher to understand how individuals experience and perceive their world and lives (Bell, 2005; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). With this research, I intended to get a closer look into my experiences and perceptions of my individual teaching persona. Thus, I decided to conduct this research with a qualitative approach.

Data Collection Tools

This self-study research was conducted by using a qualitative approach. To gather data that would allow me to answer my research question and to develop a plan for my future teaching practice, and with the focus on personal responses in mind, I used data collection tools that provided data from such individual responses of the participants. I decided to collect data that allowed me to understand my personal views, compare them with individual student reactions to my teaching and verify them by using more objective data. Three different tools were selected: personal journals, a questionnaire responded to by students, and classroom observations. By using these three different tools, I also expected to triangulate my data to get more valid findings and to obtain a deeper understanding of my research topics (Carter et al., 2014).

Personal Journals

For the first data collection tool, I decided to use personal journals. Considering the limited amount of time available for the data collection process, one entry was written at the end of each of three different English lessons (see Appendices B to D). The journals allowed me to

use my own words to express my feelings and to write down everything I considered noteworthy regarding my experiences in the classroom. Journals do not follow a set structure or rules (Lighthall, 2004; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009), so I decided to create them with the following four guiding questions in mind:

1. In which situations did I use code-switching?
2. What was the reason / were the reasons for changing to L1 in these situations?
3. How did I perceive the students' reaction to either speaking in English or Spanish?
4. Did the amount of time in which I used Spanish changed during the lesson?

These questions helped me to focus mainly on those situations that occurred during the lessons that had to do with code-switching and my students' use of the L1, and how I discerned the students' reactions at those moments. Since there was a time gap of several hours or days between the lessons and writing the journal, it was assumed that following this loose structure would be best for recalling specific situations in the classroom when writing the journals. The rationale behind the decision to write journals was that they would serve as documents of my personal experiences and perceptions of both my teaching practice and the reactions it elicits from my students (King & LaRocco, 2006).

Questionnaire

The next data collection tool for this research is an open-ended questionnaire responded to by students. Since computers were used a lot in the school and Chromebooks were available for the students in each English lesson, the questionnaire was designed using Google Forms. This facilitated the collection and analysis of the data because the responses were already available in digital form. Considering the imbalanced level of English of the students and to make sure that everyone comprehended the questions (Peytcheva, 2020), the questionnaire was designed in

Spanish and the students gave their responses in Spanish as well. The questionnaire consisted of a set of seven questions that aimed at gathering information about the students' feelings and perceptions in the English lessons (see Appendix A). The first two questions aimed at getting responses and reactions to situations in which the teacher predominantly talks in English. The idea behind these questions was to fathom how the amount of English I use in the classroom might affect students' behaviour and learning process. The following four questions addressed the students' feelings when talking in English or Spanish. With these questions, I intended to give the students an opportunity to express their feelings regarding the use of languages. The student responses should provide a meaningful insight into preferences, advantages, and limitations that using one language or the other might have, especially in view of the question whether being forced to talk in English might produce sensations of speaking anxiety and how to decrease it. With the last question, the students could express their opinions of what could improve the English lesson. It was assumed that the responses to this question provide useful information regarding the amount of English and Spanish that should be used in the lessons. The rationale behind using an open-ended questionnaire was to obtain data that reflected directly the emotions and perceptions of the students without influencing the results by giving them a set of answers to choose from (Brown, 2009; Creswell, 2015). With the responses written in their own words, I intended to understand to what extent the students' perceptions coincide with my own to reflect on my teaching practice and classroom management.

Classroom Observations

The third data collection tool used in this research are classroom observations. Due to the limited time available for the research and the circumstances at the school, two lessons were recorded on video and observed by me afterwards. Since there is no consistent overall definition

of classroom observations (O'Leary, 2020), I created an observation template that considers the most relevant aspects of the lessons for this research (see Appendix E). The template followed to some extent the guiding questions used for the journals, so that similar and comparable data could be obtained. During the observations, I focused on the language used by my students and by me in general, which language was used or switched to in certain situations and how the students' and I reacted at these moments. The rationale behind the use of classroom observations in this research was to collect data from an external point of view. Both journals and the student questionnaire provided personal, to some extent even emotional data. With the possibility of collecting more objective data from actual events by using classroom observations (Cowie, 2009; Creswell, 2015), it was assumed that data gathered with this tool would be appropriate to verify the more subjective data collected with the other tools.

Data Analysis

The data analysis used for this self-study research was centred on thematic coding. The data was analysed in different steps. First, the student questionnaire was analysed by using Google Spreadsheet. The responses to each question were thoroughly read, question by question, to find patterns among them. Then, those responses that showed a common pattern were grouped, e.g., all responses that showed that the students had difficulties with following the English lesson when the teacher talked a lot in English were put in one group, and all responses that stated that the students had no problem in those situations were put in another group. The same process was repeated for all the questions. During the process, the most outstanding responses were marked. Among those were responses that I considered highly interesting or appropriate to use for the presentation of the findings. Based on the responses, a first set of findings was created, and the corresponding responses were grouped with each finding. Then, the

journals were analysed by using Google Docs. They were read with the aim of finding patterns and situation descriptions that either match or contrast with the results of the response analysis in the first step. Quotes and noteworthy passages were marked and added to their corresponding group of findings. Afterwards, the observation protocols were analysed to find matches or discrepancies with the previously found results. In the final step, those groups of findings that appeared in all three data collection tools were analysed again to figure out whether they serve to answer the research question or not.

Research Findings

In the following chapter, I will present and discuss the key findings that emerged from the analysis of the data collected through journals, classroom observations, and a questionnaire responded to by the students.

Consequences of Extensive L2 Use by the Teacher

The first key finding that was obtained from the analysis of the data is related to the consequences and reactions that extensive use of English by the teacher elicits in the students. While analysing the students' answers of the questionnaire, a pattern emerged regarding their ability to follow the lesson when the teacher predominantly speaks in English. Some of the students indicated that they would get easily lost or distracted and that they would have difficulties following the lesson at those moments. One student answered the question if it would be difficult for them to follow the lesson when the teacher speaks a lot in English by stating: *Yes, because I do not understand the teacher and I get lost in the class* [Translated from Spanish]. Another student replied with: *Yes, because I do not understand them when they talk fast* [Translated from Spanish]. These student perceptions were also confirmed in the analysis of the

journals and the classroom observations. As noted in one of the journals, after giving instructions of an activity in English, "*I saw that some of the students did not understand them. I asked one of their classmates to explain it in English. Few students started to read the title and looked at the images, but some others were visibly distracted by other things*" (Journal 1, Sept. 26, 2022, Appendix B). During a classroom observation, a similar reaction could be observed. When the teacher gave instructions in English only, some of the students started conversations among them without paying any attention to the teacher. However, not all students responded in the same way to the use of English. In the questionnaire, some of the more proficient students answered in negative whether they would find it difficult to follow the class when the teacher speaks a lot in English. One of them replied, *no, I speak and understand English quite easily* [Translated from Spanish], and another respondent stated that they would not have any problem *because I have a good level of understanding and speaking English* [Translated from Spanish]. Again, this perception was confirmed by data collected with journals and the classroom observations. In one of the journals, I noted down: "*I gave the instructions in English, they could also read them on the screen. The most proficient students understood the instructions, but the greater part of the class struggled with them*" (Journal 2, Sept. 30, 2022, Appendix C).

The data analysis showed that the extensive use of English by the teacher can have severe consequences in the classroom, especially for the more insecure students and those with a lower English proficiency who may fall even further behind their more proficient classmates. In this regard, the findings obtained with this research contradict, at least to some extent, those language teaching approaches that propose to reduce the use of L1 in the classroom to a minimum. Krashen and Terrell (1998) and Ellis (2008) promoted the strict use of L2 in the foreign language learning process, given their argument that a higher amount of L2 input and opportunities for

using the L2 in the classroom would be most beneficial for language learners. However, the findings of this research suggest that an extensive use of the L2 may be detrimental for the students' learning process since the students are at constant risk of losing the connection with the lesson and the gap between the more and less proficient students may increase.

Based on this finding, the main challenge for me as an English teacher is to merge the ideas of the communicative language teaching approach, which relies strongly on the use of the L2 in the classroom (Mineduc, 2015), with the reality in the Chilean EFL classrooms. It is crucial not to leave the less proficient students behind for the sake of strictly meeting the Ministry's teaching standards. To achieve this conjunction, it is important to find a balance between the use of L1 and L2 that allows the students to be exposed to the highest possible amount of English without losing the connection to the lesson. Strategies such as code-switching, which is the object of interest of this investigation, may be an appropriate means to achieve this goal.

Students' Reactions to Using the L2

The next key finding that followed from the data analysis is related to the students' use of English in the EFL classroom. In the questionnaire, the students were asked about their feelings when they have to give an answer in English. For some of the students, being asked to speak English provoked a series of negative emotions. One student replied that speaking English made them feel *uncomfortable because I do not know how to speak in English* [Translated from Spanish]. Some other students responded that they would feel nervous, and one response was that *when I make a mistake, I prefer to stay quiet then* [Translated from Spanish]. The classroom observations confirmed the statements of the students. In one of the observations, it was noted down that one of the students refused to repeat the answer in English after giving it in Spanish,

they shook their head and looked away from the teacher to a classmate. In one of the journals, I wrote down almost the same situation in another lesson: "*I asked them if they could repeat it in English. One student just shook [their] head and refused to do it"* (Journal 1, Sept. 26, 2022, Appendix B). Again, this negative reaction to speaking English was not the case for every participant in the questionnaire. Some of the responses were more positive. One student enjoyed speaking in English in class, stating that they would feel *good because I like English very much* [Translated from Spanish]. Others relied on the help of the teacher in case they would make a mistake. This, however, could only partially be confirmed by the other data sources. It was found that students almost exclusively used Spanish in the classroom, and only after being reminded to speak English, some of them did it. One journal entry stated that after an activity, "*some students raised their hands to give their answers, and they did it in Spanish"* (Journal 1, Sept. 26, 2022, Appendix B). In the classroom observations, it was observed that Spanish was the predominant language used by the students, only during some activities they would switch to English, but mostly for a few words or when they had to read a text.

The data provided an important insight into the differing student perceptions and feelings regarding speaking English in the classroom. A wide range of emotions, both positive and negative, could be found. The research showed that foreign language anxiety is a serious issue in the EFL classroom. When the students feel forced to use English, they may start to feel under pressure and nervous, which can decrease their performance and hinder their learning progress (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). This research also showed that the gap between the more and less proficient students can be an important factor in developing language anxiety among the students. In this regard, the findings are in line with Young (1991), who found that less proficient students who compare themselves to their more proficient classmates are more likely to develop

symptoms of language anxiety. For me as an English teacher, the results of this research provide an important aspect regarding my future teaching. During the time of conducting this research, I already tried to work against my students' speaking anxiety by praising every correct answer they gave in class to motivate them. Whenever I felt that a student was extremely uncomfortable giving an answer in English (especially after a few failed attempts), I had them switch to Spanish to calm down. One disadvantage of this strategy, however, was that often the entire class switched to Spanish and the use of English was almost completely abandoned. Thus, it will be crucial for me to further develop strategies that allow students to use English without feeling anxious and to recognise tense moments, in which a student may feel insecure and uncomfortable, but also to learn in which situations the use of the L1 might be the more appropriate strategy without losing the focus on communicating in English as much as possible.

Code-switching Used by the Teacher for Motivation and Support

A third key finding relates to the effects of code-switching used by the teacher as a tool for motivation and support. In the questionnaire, the students were asked what they think would make it easier for them to follow the lessons. The responses revealed a very clear pattern. Most of the students would like the teacher to use more Spanish when giving instructions or explaining content. One student replied that the teacher should *give the instructions in Spanish and English* [Translated from Spanish], and another one proposed that the teachers *talk a bit more in Spanish and then repeat the same in English* [Translated from Spanish]. One student made the use of L1 slightly more dependent on the context by stating that only *when something remains unclear, repeat it in Spanish* [Translated from Spanish]. The students were also asked if it motivated them to use more English when the teacher speaks a lot in English and does not resort to Spanish. In this question, the responses were more divided. While some students found it motivating–as they

could prove their language skills in that way–others found it more demotivating. One student wrote that they would feel less motivated *because I feel that I would make mistakes* [Translated from Spanish]. Another student stated that they would feel less motivated to participate *because it is not possible to understand everything [the teachers] say for those who understand little English* [Translated from Spanish]. Throughout the analysis of the journals and the observation protocols, this impression could be confirmed. The students usually seemed to be more engaged in activities or situations of building rapport with the teacher when the teacher used more Spanish. On one occasion, the students played a vocabulary activity that contained a basketball-like game. In a journal entry, I noted down that "*when I asked who's the next player for their team, they replied in Spanish, and after a failed attempt of scoring, they tried to negotiate in Spanish to repeat the shot"* (Journal 3, Oct. 3, 2022, Appendix D). For the understanding of instructions, it was also more fruitful to use Spanish, especially for students who otherwise would easily lose focus. As mentioned in one journal, "*I repeated the instructions, immediately using Spanish which helped them to understand what they were supposed to do and they started working on the exercise"* (Journal 2, Sept. 30, 2022, Appendix C). In the classroom observation, however, a critical consequence of the teacher's more frequent use of the L1 was mentioned. In one of the observed lessons, it was found that after a longer period of giving instructions and explanations in Spanish, the teacher hardly switched back to English and a greater part of the classroom interactions occurred in Spanish.

The data analysis process revealed an important aspect regarding the teacher's use of code-switching. On the one hand, students seemed to benefit from it and their overall engagement in the class increased. This result provides an important finding which illustrates the usefulness of code-switching in certain classroom situations. On the other hand, it was observed

that using code-switching too frequently or too extensively held the risk of depriving the students of opportunities to communicate in English. This finding contradicts to some extent the research of Macaro (2001), who found that the amount of L1 used by the teacher does not influence the quantity of the L1 used by the students. However, there are some factors that may explain this contradiction, such as the age and proficiency level of the learners and the attitude of the teacher towards the use of L1. In this research, the reason for the extensive use of L1 can be found in my own teaching practice, and this can also be understood as another challenge for my future teaching practice. The lessons started in English but turned more and more to Spanish until it became the predominant language in the classroom. It will be crucial for me to remind myself to move back to English every time I switched to Spanish.

Consequences of the Frequent Use of L1 by the Students

The fourth key finding is directly connected to the consequences of frequent use of the L1 by the students in the lesson. When being asked in the questionnaire about their feelings when they could use Spanish in the English lesson, most students replied in a similar positive way. One student answered that they would feel *a bit more relaxed* [Translated from Spanish] and others replied that they would feel more confident and more comfortable. This finding coincides with the previously presented findings in that the use of a certain kind of language, the L1 in this case, seemed to have a positive effect on the students. The journals also confirmed the students' statements. In all journal entries, it was found that conversations among the students and often between students and the teacher happened in Spanish. A quote from one of the entries summarised this impression: "*While I was monitoring the activities, some students got me involved in a little conversation in Spanish. The other students, who were working on their exercises, also talked only in Spanish to each other, I didn't hear any interaction in English*"

(Journal 2, Sept. 30, 2022, Appendix C). The classroom observations confirmed this subjective impression since it was observed in both lessons that communication in the classroom occurred almost exclusively in Spanish, with the teacher being the only person who used English more frequently.

However, when being asked in the questionnaire whether they would prefer speaking Spanish or English in the English lesson, many students stated that they would prefer using English, mostly for the reason to improve their language skills.

This finding showed another interesting aspect that can be related to the question whether code-switching may help to reduce speaking anxiety. On the one hand, the students felt more comfortable using their native language. At the same time, however, they would prefer to use English. One of the several possible reasons for this contradiction could be the feeling of anxiety around the idea of having to use a foreign language, perhaps as a result of previous negative experiences. The challenge for me behind this finding will be to take the students' desire of using English in the classroom and decrease the anxiety it may provoke in the moment of actually engaging in speaking tasks. Here again, code-switching can be an appropriate strategy. As Demir Azay (2017) observes, code-switching can be useful to build rapport by addressing students in a more empathetic way, and it therefore can be useful for me to slowly guide the students to use more English in the lessons without overburdening them mentally.

Implications

The purpose of this research was to find explanations of how the use of code-switching can influence my students' speaking anxiety. Considering the research question, this research provided some important and interesting results that can be valuable for my development as an English teacher. According to the definition of foreign language anxiety given by Horwitz et al.

(1986), feeling nervous or worried in situations in which a person has to use a foreign language are typical symptoms of language anxiety. Applying this thinking to the findings of this study, it can be assumed that there is a high probability that at least some of the students who participated in this research suffer from language anxiety. Therefore, conducting this research was an important first step to understand the consequences and possible solutions for this phenomenon. The results of this self-study are also in line with the findings of Vaccarini (2019), who found in their research that language anxiety often appears when students are forced to speak. This insight is important information for my professional development. It can help me understand why students react in certain situations the way they do and how to adopt my teaching practice in these situations.

Furthermore, this research offered some valuable information regarding the use of code-switching. Various investigations (e.g., Ali Rezaee & Fathi, 2021; Bruen & Kelly, 2014; Maleki & Varanzadeh, 2016) demonstrate that code-switching can be useful to reduce students' language anxiety. As shown above, the results of this research attained similar results since the students felt less anxious and lost when they and their teacher used the L1. To reach this finding in my own research is of utmost importance for me. It helped me realise that my teaching practice does not have to eliminate all use of Spanish. On the contrary, the use of Spanish can provide many opportunities for my students to improve their English skills. Since the beginning of this self-study, I have begun to scrutinise my own beliefs regarding the use of the L1 in EFL teaching. Prior to this research, based on my personal experiences and studies, I advocated a stricter approach of teaching a foreign language only in this language, following the natural approach of Krashen and Terrell (1998), with additional sense around communication in the L2 based on Ellis (2008) and Crichton (2009). Nonetheless, after conducting this research, my

perspective has changed. After reflecting on my own teaching experience and analysing the students' comments regarding their use of English and Spanish and how my language can influence their learning process and their emotions in the classroom, I see the importance of a learner's native language in the process of learning a foreign language. As Atkinson (1987) stated, not using the L1 can deprive the learner of crucial opportunities. During this research, and putting more emphasis on using Spanish with my students, I understood that effectively using the L1 is a valuable tool that offers opportunities for my students. For my future teaching practice, it will be important to work on the implementation of this tool for the benefit of my students and for my own.

Conclusions

This self-study offered some important findings regarding language anxiety and the use of code-switching as means to decrease it for the benefit of the language learners. It showed how the teacher's language choice can influence the students' learning process, both positively and negatively. The research further provided important insights into the correlation of language anxiety and code-switching to decrease language anxiety. However, the results of this study were limited by the short time available to conduct it and the few data that could be collected. Thus, further and more profound investigations should follow to get a deeper and more extensive understanding of the phenomenon of language anxiety and what teachers can do to help students who suffer from it. Furthermore, choosing the form of a self-study for this research was an interesting approach to reflect on my own beliefs and understandings of the language teaching and learning process. Based on the results of this research and the research process itself, it helped me to question my own beliefs critically and to get a new and broader perspective of the

language learning and teaching process. In this regard, this self-study was a valuable experience for my personal and professional development.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire for the students:

Pregunta 1: *
¿Te resulta difícil seguir la clase de inglés cuando tu profesor habla mucho en inglés? Explica por qué.

Long answer text

Pregunta 2:
¿Te sientes más o menos motivado para participar en clase si tu profesor habla mucho inglés? Explica por qué.

Long answer text

Pregunta 3: *
¿Prefieres leer un texto en inglés o hablar en inglés? ¿Por qué?

Long answer text

Pregunta 4: *
¿Cómo te sientes cuando tienes que dar una respuesta en inglés?

Long answer text

Pregunta 5: *
¿Y cómo te sientes cuando puedes dar tus respuestas en español?

Long answer text

Pregunta 6: *
¿En qué idioma prefieres dar tus respuestas en las clases de inglés, y por qué?

Long answer text

Pregunta 7: *
¿Qué crees que te haría más fácil seguir la clase de inglés y las instrucciones que te da tu profesor? Explica por qué.

Long answer text

Appendix B

Journal 1, Sept. 26, 2022:

This is the first journal written during my practicum. With these journals, I want to record my perception of the use of English and Spanish in my 7th grade English class, when and how I use code-switching, and how I perceive the reactions of my students in those situations. This first entry was written on September 26, 2022, and the English lesson was the first after two weeks of vacations and other activities in which the students did not have any classes. It was also the first lesson of a new unit called “Future Bodies”. As usual, I started the class by greeting my students in English, some of them replied in English as well, but it was a very sleepy atmosphere, so I said “Good morning everybody!” again in a louder voice, which seemed to help waking the students up. They replied mostly in English, saying “Good morning, teacher!”. To start the lesson, I asked them how their vacations have been and if they had done something interesting or exciting. The answer ranged from “good”, over “no” or “nothing” to just smiling. I decided to repeat my question in Spanish, this time I received more answers and the students began to tell me a little bit about their vacation activities. They answered in Spanish.

The following part of the English lesson was a vocabulary activity about body parts. I asked the students which parts of the body they know, first in English, then, after realising that they apparently did not understand the question, I repeated the question in Spanish. Some students answered in English, they mentioned common body parts like “head”, “hands”, and “arms”. The exercise was a matching exercise in which the students had to assign the words of body parts to the correct part of the body. They worked in pairs and talked almost exclusively in Spanish with each other.

The next exercise was a short brainstorming activity. The students saw the title of the text they would listen to afterwards (“Changing bodies”) and some related images. I asked them to think about what the text could be about and to share their ideas with the rest of the class. While giving the instructions, I saw that some of the students did not understand them. I asked one of their classmates to explain it in English. Few students started to read the title and looked at the images, but some others were visibly distracted by other things. I asked them if they had understood what they were supposed to do. I could see that they did not really understand me, so I went on and explained the instructions to them again; I did this in English. The students still did

not understand me, so I switched to Spanish. One student asked me in Spanish what the title means, so I translated it for him. I told them that they could work in pairs, using Spanish immediately, and the students started to talk a bit about the exercise, again exclusively in Spanish. After a few minutes I asked them to share their ideas with the rest of the class. Some students raised their hands to give their answers, and they did it in Spanish. I let them finish their answer, then I asked them if they could repeat it in English. One student just shook his head and refused to do it, another one tried it and with a lot of help from me he managed to give the answer in English. I saw that he felt quite uncomfortable while doing it.

The text of the lesson was a short, 2-minute audio about how human bodies may change in the future. The students should answer some short questions related to the text. I presented the instructions and the questions in English, and translated both immediately without asking the students if they had understood the instructions or the questions. Again, I asked for volunteers to give their answers. The few students that raised their hands gave their answers either in one word in English or they switched to Spanish. I just repeated their answer in English without asking them to do so.

Appendix C

Journal 2, Sept. 30, 2022:

This second journal was written on September 30, 2022. The focus of this English lesson was on grammar and production. As always, I started the class by greeting my students in English. Most of them replied with their routine greeting in English. To start the class, I asked them how they are and how their day has been so far, the students answered either in Spanish or with one-word replies in English, such as “good” or “okay”. Then I went on to start the lesson by presenting the objective and giving a short overview of the lesson’s content. I did this in English. I could see that some of the students paid attention while others got distracted either in conversations with their classmates or with their phones. I asked a student to put away his phone, first in English, and then immediately again in Spanish. I had to repeat the same at some other moments during this lesson with different students. On those occasions, I used Spanish immediately, without relying on English first.

The language part of the lesson was about “will and won’t for predictions”. I started to present this grammar part in English. I asked the students what they thought a prediction would be, and they answered with its Spanish translation. I switched to Spanish and asked them for an example, and one student gave me an example in Spanish. I explained, still speaking Spanish, how his example was similar to English and I translated it to English. Then I explained the three forms of predictions (affirmative, negative and interrogative) and how “will” and “will not / won’t” was used in those cases. At first, I explained it in English. One student had a question about it, and asked me in Spanish, I answered in Spanish. I went on speaking in Spanish, and I asked the students if they had understood it and if it was difficult. They replied in Spanish that it would not be so difficult and that they had understood. Realising that we had spoken a greater part of the lesson in Spanish, I switched to English again and let the students do some exercises in pairs to practise the grammar features. While I was monitoring the activities, some students got me involved in a little conversation in Spanish. The other students, who were working on their exercises, also talked only in Spanish to each other, I didn’t hear any interaction in English. After a few minutes, I let the students read their answers of the exercises. Since it was only reading, the students did this in English. When there was a wrong answer, I asked in English if the others agree. One student asked me what the question was, so I repeated it in Spanish. Their correction was a mixture between Spanish and English.

Afterwards, I presented the free practice exercise of the lesson in which the students had to come up with predictions about the human body in the future. I gave the instructions in English, they could also read them on the screen. The most proficient students understood the instructions, but the greater part of the class struggled with them. I repeated them step by step, still in English, asking after each step if it would be clear now. A few more students understood the instructions. The students then started to work, and while I was monitoring the activity, I could see some distracted students doing other things but working. I asked them if they'd understood the activity, they told me no, so I repeated the instructions, immediately using Spanish which helped them to understand what they were supposed to do and they started working on the exercise. Again, I heard that all of the conversations in the classroom were held in Spanish.

After this activity, the time was almost up, so I ended the lesson with a short closure, asking the students how they feel after this class. I gave them the opportunity to answer in English or Spanish, and all of them answered in Spanish.

Appendix D

Journal 3, Oct. 3, 2022:

This third journal was written on Monday, October 3, 2022. The objective of this day's lesson was to work with vocabulary about body parts and working with a topic-related dialogue. As a routine, I started the lesson with a greeting in English. The students replied a bit tired today, so I repeated the greeting louder. Finally, the students replied in English. As usual, I asked them how their weekend has been, some of them told me about their weekend activities, they all talked to me in Spanish. At first, I translated some of their answers and reacted to them in English, then I just replied in Spanish.

After these first introductive moments, I started the lesson by presenting the first activity. It was a vocabulary warm-up on a worksheet I handed out. The activity consisted of 15 sentences, each one with a missing word. In pairs, the students had to fill in the missing word, which was one of the body parts they had learned in the two previous weeks. I explained to them in English what they had to do. The activity was pretty much self-explanatory, so there was no need for me to repeat the instructions. The students started quickly to work on their worksheets. A few students in the back of the class did not pay attention, so they asked me what they'd have to do. I repeated the instructions in English, and as I could see that they didn't really understand me, I switched to Spanish and explained it again. Then they also started to work. After a few minutes, most students had finished their work, so I continued the lesson by presenting the second activity, a game called "Trashcan Basketball". I organised the pairs into three larger teams and explained the rules for the game in English. After I had finished, I asked one student if he could repeat the instructions, and he did it in Spanish. I didn't let him switch to English since it was more important for me that all students understood the instructions. In turns, one student of each team read a sentence from the previous activity, and if the correct word was filled in the blank, the student got the chance to win an extra point for the team by throwing a tennis ball from one end of the classroom into the trash can. The students were very excited during the game, they were competitive and enjoyed it a lot. When I asked who's the next player for their team, they replied in Spanish, and after a failed attempt of scoring, they tried to negotiate in Spanish to repeat the throw. I didn't let them switch to English, however, most of the time I answered in English. During the entire game, the conversations among the students happened exclusively in Spanish, and again, I didn't tell them to talk in English.

Since the lesson was rather short (we started with a little delay), and the game took longer than I had expected, there was no time left to go to the reading of the lesson. I finished the lesson with the closure in which I asked the students first in English, then immediately in Spanish if they enjoyed the lesson and if they would like to play games more often. The students replied in Spanish.

Appendix E

Classroom Observation Protocol:

Observation N°:	Date:
Classroom activity	
Predominant language used by teacher	
Switching between languages (teacher)	
Predominant language by students	
Switching between languages (students)	
Teacher's reactions to L1/L2 use of students	
Students´ reactions to L1/L2 use of teacher	
Students' reactions after being asked to answer in English	