

The Relationship of Code-Switching Strategy Use with Anxiety and Speaking Fluency of Learners

Masooome Maleki¹, Omid Varzandeh²

1. M.A. Department of English, Kurdistan Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Sanandaj, Iran.

2. Ph.D., Department of English, Sanandaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Sanandaj, Iran.

Abstract – Code-switching is seen to be a useful communicative strategy tool in the acquisition of English language teaching and learning process to reduce learners’ anxiety and to develop their oral proficiency. The present study was conducted to explore the relationship of code-switching with anxiety and speaking fluency. To achieve the research objectives, fifty EFL learners at intermediate level of language achievement were involved in the present study. In the present study to assess the association between studied variables including: Code switching strategy, Fluency of speaking, and Oral communication anxiety, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was run. The results showed that the relationships of Code switching strategy use with fluency of speaking and oral communication anxiety were positive and significant.

Keywords: Bilingualism, Code-switching, FLL Anxiety, and Fluency of speaking.

1. INTRODUCTION

The most important feature of one language is speech as a social phenomenon to get in contact with others. Language is used as a medium for communicative goals with others. Using communication strategies such as modification devices, non-linguistic strategies, L1-based strategies, target language-based strategies and avoidance strategies are important in helping L2 learners to communicate successfully when they are faced with a problem in speech production. One of the strategies employed by students is L1- switching. In most cases, using code-switching by teachers is useful for some pedagogical purposes.

As a common occurrence in ESL/EFL teaching/learning process, when bilingual speakers communicate with others, they often take advantage of both languages for their communications at different percentage along the entire continuum of proficiency, this phenomenon is known as code-switching in bilingual literature. Myers -Scotton (2006) defined code-switching (CS) as “the use of two languages varieties in the same conversation” (p.239). Code-switching in the cognitive process of a bilingual speaker refers to the act of switching from second language (L2) to first language (L1). Iran is a multicultural country having a large number of languages being spoken in it. Persian is the national language whereas Kurdish, Turkish, Arabic, and Luri are commonly used languages in its cities. English language is the lingua franca of elite class in Iran and it is used as a foreign language in the official works. So bilingualism is a natural phenomenon of communication in Iran.

One of the necessary skills in learning English as second or foreign language is speaking. Learners with different learning backgrounds have different levels of anxiety and

nervousness during second/foreign language learning process preventing them from achieving the desired goal. The effects of foreign language anxiety in the foreign language classroom, and academic performance on learners' self-confidence and level of involvement are inevitable. Anxious learners suffer from mental barriers during communication process. Capable L2/ FL learners use some communication strategies such as modification devices, non-linguistic strategies, L1-based strategies, target language-based strategies and avoidance strategies to overcome their anxiety and to help themselves to communicate successfully. Code-switching is seen to be a useful communicative strategy tool in the acquisition of English language teaching and learning process to reduce learners' anxiety and to develop their oral proficiency. L1- switching or code-switching as one sample of communication strategy in ESL/EFL teaching/learning process refers to a cognitive phenomenon to the act of switching from foreign or second language (L2) to learners' first language (L1). By code-switching, a bi- or multilingual speaker shifts from one language to another in the course of a conversation.

1.1. Code-switching Definitions

According to Grosjean, (1987) code-switching (C-S) is defined as the phenomenon of using more than one language in a certain situation. Grosjean (p. 145) defined code-switching as "the alternate use of two or more languages in the same utterance or conversation". Schendl and Wright, (2011, p. 3) defined code-switching as the ability to "alternate between languages in an unchanged setting, often within the same utterance". Gumperz (1982) sees code switching as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems" (p. 59). Code switching, defined by Myers-Scotton (1993a) as "the use of two or more languages in the same conversation, usually within the same conversational turn, or even within the same sentence of that turn". English-only classroom may lead to non-success and anxiety because of the lack of learners' proper comprehensible input. By using different code-switching strategy functions such as explaining new vocabulary, grammar, and new concepts, the learners' comprehensible input improve during the learning process and their anxiety may be reduced (Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009).

1.2. Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety is a psychological phenomenon in the productive skills, or the receptive, defined as the feeling of unease, worry, nervousness and apprehension experienced when learning or using a second or foreign language. Foreign language anxiety is defined as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process. "Foreign Language Anxiety," first proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), can be defined as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128) and is made up of communication apprehension (the fear of communicating with other people), test anxiety (the fear of being evaluated by quizzes, tests, and other work), and fear of negative evaluation (the fear of how others view the speaker). Foreign language anxiety has a

debilitating effect on the oral performance of speakers of English as a second language. Many believe that the anxiety surrounding foreign language may be due to a fear of mis-portraying authenticity (Horwitz, 2000, 2009; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). In other words, a student may be afraid of “sounding weird” in their attempts to reproduce a foreign language. Unfortunately, there is a negative relationship between second language grade achievement and foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, 2000). Additionally, this type of anxiety can hinder communication while learning the new language which is essential in obtaining proficiency (Kleinmann, 1977; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a, 1991b).

1.3. Fluency of Speaking

For English language learners (ELLs), the challenge of speaking in front of classrooms, reading out loud, or making a presentation in front of the class can be overwhelming. Yet oral language skills are an essential part of a student's language and literacy development. Oral language provides the foundation for literacy development. Richards (2009, p.14) mentioned a definition about fluency, “natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence”.

1.4. Statement of the Problem

By using code-switching at the early stages of learning English as a foreign language, learners may begin effective and successful learning and gradually become proficient speakers of English language. When they become proficient speakers of English languages and become comfortable with the learning circumstance, without any unnecessary anxiety, the learners develop their oral proficiency and become fluent speakers. In this study, the researchers investigated the relationship of learners' code switching strategy using during foreign language learning process and their anxiety and fluency of speech.

1.5. Research Questions

This study was set out to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL learners' use of code switching strategy and oral communication anxiety?
2. Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL learners' use of code switching strategy and fluency of speaking?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Participants

For the present study, among 97 students learning English in Sanandaj private language institutes, 50 students at intermediate level were selected randomly. Participants selected for this study were studying English at the same level determined by the institutes. Their level of proficiency was determined by the *Oxford Placement Test* (OPT) which was first administered to all participants. Then, based on the normal probability curve, those

participants who were placed between one standard deviation above the mean and one standard deviation below the mean were selected as the main participants. The 50 selected participants consisted of 33 female students (67%) and 17 male students (33%) within the age range 16-25 years. It is important to mention that the effect of EFL students' age range and gender considered as an effective factor on learners' code switching were undermined in this study.

2.2. Instrumentation

The data were collected through administering four instruments.

1. Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

The Oxford Placement Test was used to ensure the participants' level of proficiency and their homogeneity. Reliable Placement Test to assess the learners' English language proficiency is composed of 45 multiple-choice questions comprising grammatical points to measure the test takers' knowledge of grammar, reading, and vocabulary to measure their ability to use their grammatical and pragmatic knowledge to communicate a range of meanings. In each item of this test, one is asked to choose the best answers for the missing part required to complete an item.

2. Code-switching strategy use questionnaire

The items in this questionnaire were adapted from the functions of code switching as reported in the studies by (Ahmad & Jusoff, 1999, Canagarajah, 1995, Ferguson, 2009, Greggio & Gil, 2007 as cited in Selamat, 2014, p.51). This questionnaire composed of two main sections asking about the code-switching strategy that the students actually used to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning processes. The instrument used for code-switching strategy in this study include 15 items in a multiple-choice test format with five-point Likert scale, consisting of five options of Never, hardly ever, often, most of the time, and every time. In this questionnaire, learners should find the statements about code-switching. In part one, there is learners' background. In part two, there are fifteen statements; they should express their personal preference and/or beliefs in the practice of code-switching (the use of Kurdish/Persian) during English lessons. The reliability index for the Code-switching strategy use questionnaire estimated through Cronbach's Alpha showed acceptable values ($r=0.734$).

3. Oral communication anxiety questionnaire

Yaikhong & Usaha's (2012) oral communication anxiety questionnaire composed of two main sections used to get the opinions of the learners about their current curriculum and their ideas about the instructors. The main objective of this questionnaire is to determine which issues cause the oral communication problems in classroom settings. The instrument used for assessing oral communication anxiety in this study include 28 items in a multiple-choice test format with five-point Likert scale, consisting of five options of strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree. In part one, there is bilingualism background. In part two, there are twenty eight statements to express Oral Communication Anxiety during English lessons. The distribution of the questions observed a sequence. In other words, statements are related to communication strategy, the evaluation of instructors, the evaluation

of the courses and exams, and the self-evaluation of the students. The reliability index for the oral communication anxiety questionnaire estimated through Cronbach's Alpha showed acceptable values ($r= 0.843$).

4. The fluency of speaking questionnaire

Wang's (2013) fluency of speaking questionnaire composed of two main sections asking about the fluency of learners' speaking process. The instrument which was used for measuring fluency of speaking in this study included 10 items in a multiple-choice test format with four-point likert scale, consisting of four options of "always, usually, seldom, and never". In this questionnaire, learners were required to find the statements about fluency. In part one; there are four statements to express demographic background data. In part two, there are ten statements, to express the degree of fluency of speech. The reliability index for the fluency of learners' speaking questionnaire estimated through Cronbach's Alpha showed acceptable values ($r= 0.682$).

2.3. Procedure

During May, 2015, the researchers started distributing the questionnaires among the participants of this study selected from foreign language institutes of Sanandaj. While distributing the questionnaires, the researchers informed the participants of the goals and importance of the research. Learners were informed that their contribution would be anonymous in this research. They were also asked to present their true and honest responses. In addition, the participant were informed to ask for any clarification they might have needed to make it easier to understand. The questionnaires were printed and administered in the institute students' foreign language classes. On average, it took each respondent around 25 minutes to read and answer the items. Once they finished answering the questionnaire, they were requested to check their responses for incompleteness or missing answers. After sampling, the participants were invited to answer code switching strategy questionnaire in about 10 minutes to address the research questions. Then, the oral communication anxiety and fluency of speaking were employed.

2.4. Statistical Analyses

The data of code switching Questionnaire which presented learners' personal preference and/or beliefs in the practice of code-switching (the use of Kurdish/Persia) during English lessons; questionnaire for oral communication anxiety; and questionnaire for fluency of speaking collected to answer research questions and analyzed by SPSS 15.0. Cronbach's Alpha and Pearson Correlation Statistical data were used to estimate the reliability of the questionnaires.

To answer the research questions, descriptive statistics were done to the data gathered through three questionnaires. Values such as the mean, Standard deviation and frequency were presented to each item. By running the descriptive statistics the possible differences among foreign language learners in terms of their code switching using; oral communication anxiety; and fluency of speaking was investigated. Inferential statistics of the *Spearman rank correlation* were adopted to find the relationship between EFL learners' code-switching

strategies use and their oral communication anxiety and the relationship between EFL learners' code-switching strategies use and fluency of speaking.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Descriptive Statistics

3.1.1 The amount of Iranian EFL learners' use of code switching strategy

The instrument used for code-switching strategy in this study includes 15 items in a multiple-choice test format with five-point Likert scale, consisting of five options of Never, hardly ever, often, most of the time, and every time.

Table 1: The description of the EFL learners' use of code switching strategy

variable	participants	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
EFL learners' use of code switching strategy	50	43	71	58.44	7.508	56.37

By dividing the mean (58.44), by the number of items (15), the amount of each participant's code switching strategy use is obtained to every question. According to this formula, the number of EFL learners' use of code switching strategy is obtained 3.89.

3.1.2 The amount of Iranian EFL learners' oral communication anxiety

In this study, The instrument used for assessing oral communication anxiety in this study includes 28 items in a multiple-choice test format with five-point Likert scale, consisting of five options of strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree.

Table 2: The description of the EFL learners' oral communication anxiety

variable	participants	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
EFL learners' oral communication anxiety	50	86	123	106.54	9.21	84.86

By dividing the mean (106.54), by the number of items (28), the amount of each participant's oral communication anxiety is obtained to every question. According to this formula, the number of EFL learners' oral communication anxiety is obtained 3.8.

3.1.3 The amount of Iranian EFL learners' fluency of speaking

In this study, the instrument which was used for measuring fluency of speaking in this study included 10 items in a multiple-choice test format with four-point likert scale, consisting of four options of “always, usually, seldom, and never”.

Table 3: The description of the EFL learners' fluency of speaking

variable	participants	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
EFL learners' fluency of speaking	50	20	38	28.76	4.951	24.513

By dividing the mean (28.76), by the number of items (10), the amount of each participant's fluency of speaking is obtained to every question. According to this formula, the number of EFL learners' fluency of speaking is obtained 2.876.

3.2. Research Questions

3.2.1 Research Question One

In order to answer the first research question which was "Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL learners’ use of code switching strategy and oral communication anxiety?", the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to measure the linear correlation between two variables Code switching strategy use and Oral communication anxiety.

The following table shows the correlation coefficient, in other words, the relationship between Code switching strategy use and Oral communication anxiety.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation; Code switching strategy use with Oral communication anxiety

		Oral communication anxiety
	Pearson Correlation	.728
Code switching strategy use	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	50

The results of the Pearson correlation ($r = .728$, $p = .001$) indicated that there was statistically significant relationship between Code switching strategy use and Oral communication anxiety. We conclude that the correlation is direct, and interpret in this manner that by an increase in using code switching strategies, the Oral communication anxiety is improved. The following scatter plot reveals relationships or association between two Oral communication anxiety and Code switching strategy use.

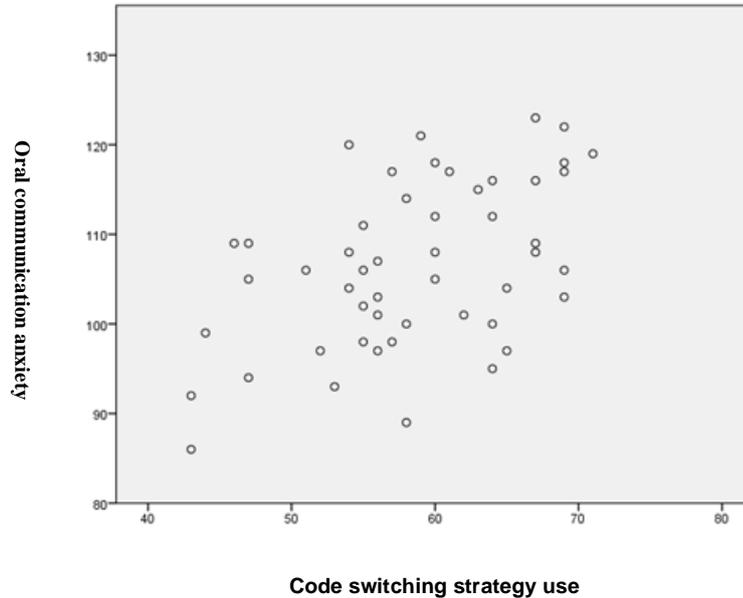


Figure 1: Scatter plot of Code switching strategy use and Oral communication anxiety

Based on the above figure, the coefficient correlation between Code switching strategy use and Oral communication anxiety is positive which is corresponded with that findings obtained from the analysis of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

3.2.2 Research Question Two

The second research question that the present study tried to address is "Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL learners' use of code switching strategy and fluency of speaking?" To answer this question, another Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was run to investigate if there is any possible relationship between Code switching strategy use and Oral communication anxiety.

The following table shows the correlation coefficient, in other words, the relationship between using Code switching strategy and Fluency of speaking.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation; Code-switching strategy use with Fluency of speaking

		Fluency of speaking
	Pearson Correlation	.867
Code switching strategy use	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	50

The results of the Pearson correlation ($r = .867$, $p = .002$, representing a weak effect size) indicated that there was significant relationship between the Code switching strategy and Fluency of speaking. It must be said that the relationship between the two variable is significant at the 0.05 level, and we conclude that the correlation is direct, and interpret in this manner that by an increase in using code switching strategies, the Fluency of speaking is improved. The following scatter plot reveals relationships or association between two Fluency of speaking and Code switching strategy use.

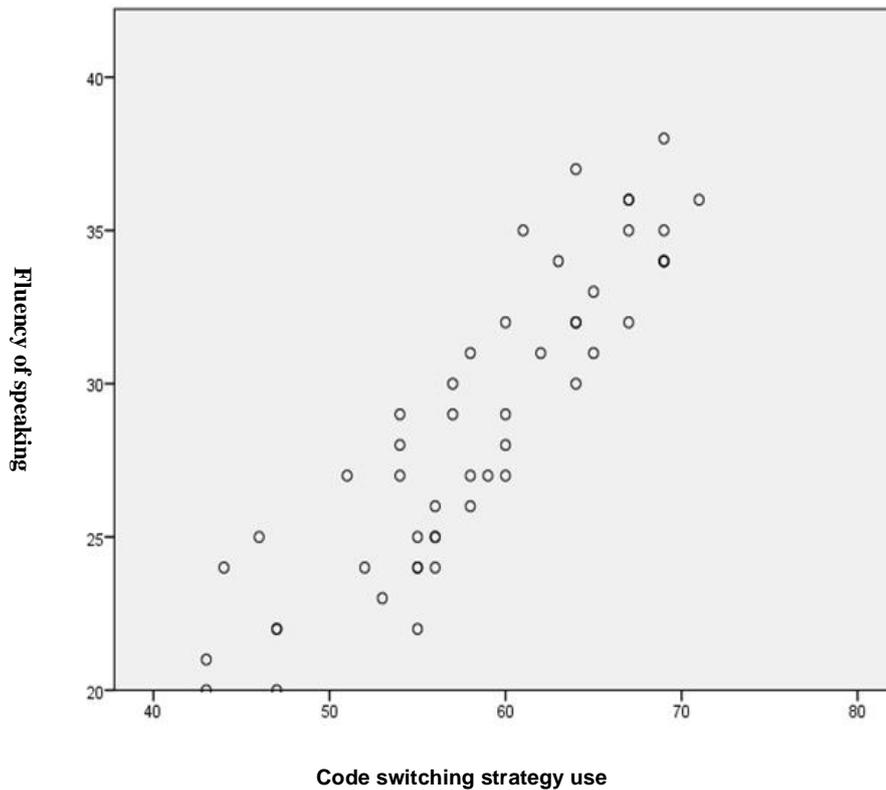


Figure 2: Scatter plot of Code switching strategy use and Fluency of speaking

Based on the above figure, the coefficient correlation between Code switching strategy use and fluency of speaking is positive which is corresponded with that findings obtained from the analysis of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

4. DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to explore to find out the relationship of EFL learners' code switching strategy use with oral communication anxiety and speaking fluency.

The quantitative analysis of the data reported most learners who used code switching strategy, got higher score on communication oral anxiety and speaking fluency. The findings of the present study is in line with Moreira (2001), and Bergsleithner (2002), and shows that code switching strategy use in interaction in the EFL classroom may have an important role in facilitating interaction as well as reducing anxiety and improving speaking.

One main factor that influences students in activating their speaking fluency in conversation class is their code switching strategy use. According to the obtained data, the correlation between Code switching strategy use and fluency of speaking equals to 0.867.

The level of significance (Sig = 0/002) is less than the desired error ($\alpha = 0.05$), so it must be said that the relationship between the two variable is significant at the 0.05 level, and we conclude that the correlation is direct, and interpret in this manner that by an increase in using code switching strategies, the Fluency of speaking is improved.

One main factor that influences students in reducing their oral communication anxiety in learning English as foreign language is their code switching strategy use. According to the table data, the correlation between Code-switching strategy use and Oral communication anxiety equals to 0.728. The level of significance (Sig = 0/001) is less than the desired error ($\alpha = 0.05$) so the hypothesis H0 is rejected and it must be said that the relationship between the two variable is significant at the 0.05 level, and we conclude that the correlation is direct, and interpret in this manner that by an increase in using code switching strategies, the Oral communication anxiety is improved.

The use of code-switching strategy during learning a new language as a second or foreign language can be helpful in maintaining conversation; in giving special effect to some key words of the utterance to attract their friends' attention; repeating special pieces of information to give it a special importance and effect; and so on. In the present study, the researchers wanted to consider the relationship between EFL learners' code switching strategy use and speaking fluency and oral communication anxiety. The findings in the present study demonstrate that there is a meaningful and direct relationship of EFL learners' code switching strategy use with speaking fluency and oral communication anxiety. Based on the obtained data, the coefficient correlation between code switching strategy use with fluency of speaking and the coefficient correlation between code-switching strategy uses with oral communication anxiety are positive which are corresponded with that findings obtained from the analysis of Spearman correlation coefficient.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to investigate a) the relationship between EFL learners' code switching strategy use and oral communication anxiety; b) the relationship between EFL learners' code switching strategy use and speaking fluency; and c) the degree to which teacher and learners in the foreign language institute of Sanandaj use code switching strategies when they teach and learn to reach these certain main goals. The findings in the present study demonstrate that there is a meaningful and direct relationship between EFL learners' code switching strategy use and speaking fluency and oral communication anxiety. Based on the obtained data, the coefficient correlation between code-switching strategy use with fluency of speaking and the coefficient correlation between code-switching strategy use with oral communication anxiety are positive which are corresponded with that findings obtained from the analysis of Spearman rank correlation coefficient. Although the present study presents influential results, our sample ($n = 50$) was not very large and limited to Sanandaj private institutes. Consider only Sanandaj private institutes' learners as participants may be sufficient for standard scientific test done to prove the relationship between EFL learners' code switching strategy use and speaking fluency and oral communication anxiety, but may not provide an acceptable support for studying various population such as younger or elderly participants, participants with different educational background, and participants with

different genders. The findings are interpreted to have pedagogical implications for syllabus designers, language teachers and students.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, B. H. & Jusoff, K. (2009). Teachers' code-switching in classroom instructions for low English proficient learners. *English Language Teaching*, 2(2), 49-55.
- Bergsleithner, J. M. (2002). *Grammar and interaction in the EFL classroom: A sociocultural study*. Unpublished master's thesis. Santa Catarina, Brazil.
- Grosjean, R. (1987). On the methodological basis of introspective methods. In C. Færch & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Introspection in second language* (pp. 54–81). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies* (Vol. 1). Cambridge University Press.
- Horwitz, E. K. (2000). It ain't over til it's over: On foreign language anxiety, first language deficits, and the confounding of variables. *Modern Language Journal*, 84, 256-259.
- Horwitz, E. K. (2009). Cultural identity and language anxiety: How self-concept and cultural expectations interact with performance in a second language. In P. Cheng & J. X. Yan (Eds.), *Cultural identity and language anxiety*, (pp. 57-69). Guanxi, China: Guangxi Normal University Press.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *Modern Language Journal*, 70, 125-132.
- Kleinmann, H. H. (1977). Avoidance behaviour in adult second language acquisition. *Language Learning*, 27, 93-107.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991a). Methods and results in the study of anxiety in language learning: A review of the literature. *Language Learning*, 41, 85-117.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991b). Investigating language class anxiety using the focused essay technique. *Modern Language Journal*, 75, 296-304.
- Moreira, M. A. R. (2001). *The mother tongue in the foreign language classroom of the great Florianópolis region: A study of state school teachers' perceptions*. Unpublished master's thesis; Santa Catarina, Brazil.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1983). The negotiation of identities in conversation: theory of markedness and code choice. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 44: 115-136.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (2006). *Multiple voices: an introduction to Bilingualism*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Richards, Jack C. (2009). *Teaching listening and speaking: from theory to practice* (RELC Portfolio Series). Singapore: Regional Language Center available at: <http://www.professorjackrichards.com/pdfs/teaching-listening-and-speaking-from-theory-to-practice.pdf>
- Selamat J. T. (2014). *Code switching in the Malaysian ESL classroom*. A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (Linguistics) at the University Of Otago Dunedin New Zealand. January 2014.
- Schendl, H., & Wright, L. (red.) (2011). *Code-switching in early English*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Wang, Zh. (2013). Developing Accuracy and Fluency in Spoken English of Chinese EFL Learners. *School of Foreign Languages*, China West Normal University.
- Yaikhong K. & Usaha S. (2012). A measure of EFL public speaking class anxiety: Scale development and preliminary validation and reliability. *English Language Teaching*; Vol. 5, No. 12; 2012.