The Survey on Airline Business Students in English-Thai Code-Switching: Technical Terms and Non-Technical Terms using in classroom context

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Abstract

This survey aimed to study the students' attitude towards the use of instructors' code-switching for both technical terms and non-technical terms in classroom discourse and also to study its effectiveness in term of learning success. The total of 240 Airline Business students who attended Aviation Safety & Security course and In-flight Service course at the College of Aviation Development and Training were investigated, of which 211 are low English proficient students and 29 are average to proficient students, based on their recent TOEIC scores. The data were gathered and analyzed by frequency distribution, percentage, arithmetic mean and standard deviation. The survey found that the instructors' code-switching has been extensively and frequently used in the aforementioned courses. The main reason for its specifically used for the purpose of facilitating effective teaching and introducing new English vocabularies to learners.

Moreover, it was revealed that students with better English proficiency considered the instructors' code-switching as a useful pedagogical technique in promoting both engagement and learning success. Nevertheless, a number of the low proficient students believed that code-switching did not provide many benefits to them and should be limited to the minimum as excessive switching might slow down their learning ability.

Key words: Code-switching, Airline business students
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1. Introduction

It has been agreed by many scholars that English has played an important role in our Thai society since the 31st December 2015 when Thailand has fully stepped into the ASEAN Economic Community for its benefits of communication in various contexts which include social, economics, technology, education, politics, and government. Hence, the opportunities in term of higher income and career advancement seemed to belong to those who can express their English proficiency when compared with those who can communicate less. Especially, in an airline industry where the fluency of English communication skills for all personnel is very much required. Afrizal (2015) referred in the English Education Journal (EEJ) that speaking is one of the productive activities in daily life and is the most important language skill because it is the main skill needed to carry out a conversation which was similar to Aungwatanakun (1994) in her book; English Teaching Methodology mentioned that the ability to speak is the most essential skill since it is the basis for communication. Reyes (1995) stated that speech-language pathologists have viewed code-switching to be an indicator of language proficiency for those whose primary language is not English.

Nowadays, the benefits were indicated by many research papers regarding the advantage of code-switching that has been extensively and frequently used in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom while other research papers, for example, Chaiwichian (2007) revealed the code-switching phenomenon of students who attended Mini English Program (MEP), learning Mathematics, English, and Science through the medium of English.

1.1 Theoretical Background - Definitions of Key Terms
Code-switching typically means changing back and forth between two languages in the conversation. In this study, code-switching refers to the switching between Thai and English.
- Code-switching is defined as the use of two languages, which implies some degree of competence in the two languages, even if bilingual fluency is not yet stable (Duran, 1994).

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- Code-switching is the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation (Milroy & Muysken, 1995).
- The term "code-switching" is also used outside the field of linguistics. Some scholars of literature use the term to describe literary styles that include elements from more than one language.
  (Lourdes Torres, 2007).
- Code-switching is shifting from one language to another in a conversation. It is a normal everyday practice among people in the world for various reasons and usually an unconscious activity (Moghadam, Samad, & Shahraki, 2012).
- Code-switching does not simply reflect social situations, but that it is a means to create social situations. (Nigel John Musk, 2012).
- Code-switching is sometimes used to refer to switching among dialects, styles or registers. In sociolinguistics, a register is a variety of language used for a particular purpose or in a particular communicative situation. (Gene Demby, 2013).

As English has spread around the world, it has been transformed to meet and accommodate particular local needs of expression and identity. Speakers code-switch because they find it easier or more appropriate, in the linguistic and/or cultural context, to communicate by switching than by keeping the utterance totally in the same language. In the classroom discourse, teachers' use of code-switching has been a subject of controversy. Some researchers found that code-switching is useful in EFL classes especially at the foundation level while others have seen it as an undesirable method in teaching the target language. Macaro and Lee (2013) as presented in their research on teacher code-switching in South Korea, the article investigated attitudes and perceptions among Korean learners. The authors explored a number of variables to these attitudes and perceptions, of which the most important was the students' age. From a total sample of 798 students, 311 were adults at university and 487 were children in the last year of primary school. Findings suggested that adults were more likely to be comfortable with English-only instruction, possibly due to their greater experience in language learning and the higher level of English proficiency. Svendsen (2014) in her study on the influences of code-switching in the second language (L2) classroom in connection to language development that investigated, if code-switching was a beneficial language strategy pertaining to pupils' oral language development in secondary school in Sweden, and also, what teacher needed to be considered when using code-switching in an educational context. The results suggested that low-proficiency learners benefit from first language (L1) usage, whereas high-proficiency students seem to both prefer and benefit more from an English-only classroom, as long as it is not too difficult for pupils to comprehend. Therefore, it was crucial for teachers to know their pupils' language level and when to use code-switching.

Bakhtiari (2014) referred in his research on code-switching and learning general knowledge of vocabulary in the Iranian university context, analyzed the roles and functions of code alternation from cognitive and linguistic as well as interactional perspectives. The research showed that the use of mother tongue in foreign language classes cannot facilitate learning and the code-switching environment did not provide better learning results in terms of vocabulary gains which was consistent with the previous studies of Sert (2005) who disclosed in his paper on the functions of code-switching in ELT (English Language Teaching) classroom context that code-switching in a language classroom is not always beneficial in learning the language. He also referred to many other researchers who believe that code-switching may be considered as a useful technique in classroom interaction, if the aim is to make meaning clear and to transfer the knowledge to students in an efficient way, and also was consistent with the research of Odlin (1989) in his research indicated that language transfer was indeed a very important factor in second language acquisition as he pointed out that the language transfer can be positive (supportive) or negative (interference). It was depended on similarities and differences between the languages and can occur on every linguistic level. According to his study, the main reason behind this phenomenon was the similarity between the languages, which was why language transfer was more likely to occur in the case of related languages, while distant languages will experience less transfer.

Whilst, the airline business instructors' use of code-switching in English-Thai has been dramatically addressed in many of the airline business classes for its acknowledgement as a substitution for aviation technical terms. It is somehow very interesting to raise the awareness whether the use of code-switching could even appear counterproductive in terms of its effectiveness towards the learning success of Airline Business students. This is consistent with the previous study of Svendsen (2014) in her study on the influences of code-switching in the second language (L2) classroom in connection to language development that investigated, if code-switching was a beneficial language strategy pertaining to pupils' oral language development in secondary school in Sweden, and also, what teacher needed to consider when using code-switching in the classroom context. The results suggested that low-proficiency learners benefit from first language (L1) usage, whereas high-proficiency students seem to both prefer and benefit more from an English-only classroom, as long as it is not too difficult for pupils to comprehend. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to aware of their pupils' English language level and to know when to use code-switching.
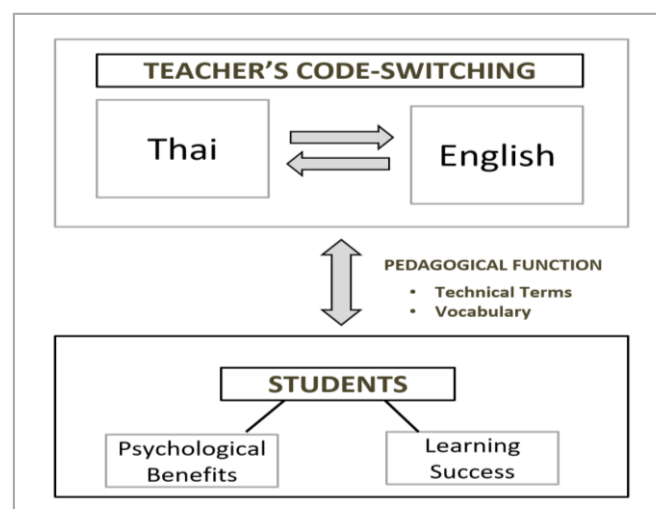
1.2 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 The use of instructor's code -switching in a classroom context

2. Objective and Research Questions
2.1 The objective of this study was to identify the frequency of the instructors' code-switching that was adopted in the classroom discourse for both courses; Aviation Safety & Security and In-Flight Service.
2.2 Research Questions
1.   What are the students' psychological benefits towards the use of instructors' code-switching?
2.   Does code-switching enhance students' learning success?

3. Materials and Methods
3.1 Participants
        The 240 participants were selected using the purposive sampling method, consisted of 211 low proficient students and 29 average to proficient students who attended Aviation Safety & Security course and In-flight Service course at the College of Aviation Development and Training. All participants are native Thai who were divided into groups according to their "Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC)" results. The test was taken in November 2018. Below is the table showing the number of students divided according to their English competency levels.

Table 1 Scope of population

English Language Competence		Total number of respondents (n = 240)
Low proficient students	(TOEIC 5 – 400)	211
Average proficient students	(TOEIC 405 – 600)	26
Proficient students	(TOEIC 605 – 990)	3

3.2 Instrument

The content of the questionnaire was designed into three (3) parts that included:
- Part 1: The frequency of the instructors' use of code-switching that was adopted in Aviation Safety & Security course and In-flight Service course.
- Part 2: Psychological benefits for students towards the use of instructors' code-switching
- Part 3: Students' learning success in term of effective learning outcomes.

3.3 Data Collection
- The primary source of data was obtained using a questionnaire in order to gather necessary information from the respondents in the authentic classroom.
- The secondary source of data was derived from students' TOEIC score result and the report from ETS (2016), Thai examinees' TOEFL scores.

3.4 Data Analysis

The quantitative data were collected and analyzed in terms of frequency distribution, percentage, arithmetic mean and standard deviation. Likert scale was used as a tool to determine the level of agreement or disagreement. There are 5 class intervals which can be interpreted as follow: strongly agree = 4.51 – 5.00, agree = 3.51 – 4.50, neutral = 2.51 – 3.50, disagree = 1.51 – 2.50, strongly disagree = 0.00 – 1.50.

3.5 Research Methodology

This descriptive research was conducted using the quantitative technique to describe the level of agreement of the respondents that were classified into two (2) distinctive groups based on students' TOEIC scores:
- Low proficient English level students (TOEIC scores 5 - 400), (n = 211).
- Average to proficient English level students (TOEIC scores 405 - 990), (n = 29).

4.   Results and Discussion

4.1 The frequency use of the instructors' code-switching

The data revealed that all of the respondents from every level of ability claimed that the use of English in both courses, (Aviation Safety & Security course and In-flight Service course) were considered a common practice as the instructors frequently mixed English with Thai in his/her lectures because of the need to educate students and also in order to facilitate their learning. A total of 92.08% of the respondents mentioned that it is common to hear the switch of language from Thai to English in these two courses. A total of 88.75% of the respondents specified that the instructors frequently mix English with Thai during the lectures. Besides, not only a total of 95% of the respondents acknowledged that the instructors' use the English language for technical terms but 79.59% of the total respondents also assented that the instructors use the English language for non-technical terms as well. A total of 72.50% of the respondents confirmed that the instructors switched back to the Thai language if they did not understand the meaning of those terms that were conveyed in English.

Table 2 The frequency of the instructors' use of code-switching that was adopted in both courses (n = 240)

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1. It is common to hear the switch of language in this two (2) courses.	79.58	12.50	7.92	0	0
2. The instructors frequently mix English with Thai during their lectures.	60.83	27.92	11.25	0	0
3. English language is used for technical terms.	73.33	21.67	5.00	0	0
4. English language is also used for non-technical terms.	36.67	42.92	18.74	1.67	0
5. The instructors switch back to Thai if you do not understand the meaning of those terms.	42.92	29.58	20.83	5.00	1.67

Table 3 Level of agreement based on students' TOEIC scores

The frequency use of the instructors' code-switching that was adopted in the classroom	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	Interpretation
Low proficient English level students (n = 211) (TOEIC scores 5 - 400)	4.34	0.73	Agree
Average to proficient English level students (n = 29) (TOEIC scores 405 - 990)	4.51	0.64	Strongly Agree

4.2 Code-switching and students' psychological benefits

The results of this research revealed the mixed-attitudes towards the use of instructors' code switching as the low proficient students were more likely to disagree on the psychological benefits they received upon the instructors' use of code switching. Meanwhile, the average to proficient learners seemed to have desirable attitude towards the use of code-switching in the classroom.

Table 4 Psychological benefits for low proficient students towards the use of instructors' code-switching (n = 211)

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1. I prefer when the instructor uses English language for technical terms and non-technical terms.	2.37	2.37	32.23	30.80	32.23
2. The instructors' code-switching help facilitate better understand to the lessons.	1.90	7.58	28.44	42.18	19.90
3. The instructors' code-switching makes me feel satisfied with my learning.	2.37	12.80	35.55	33.65	15.63
4. The instructors' code-switching helps me to develop my learning ability.	0.95	13.27	33.65	36.02	16.11
5. The instructors' code-switching help promote students' engagement.	1.90	8.53	30.81	36.49	22.27
6. It would be beneficial for me to learn new English vocabularies through instructor's code-switching.	1.42	9.48	37.91	28.44	22.75
7. I am not confident when the instructor switches to English for technical terms and non-technical terms.	0.95	6.16	35.07	32.70	25.12
8. In my opinion, I think the instructors switch the language mainly for the benefits of the students.	2.84	4.74	45.02	29.86	17.54

Table 5 Psychological benefits for average to proficient students towards the use of instructors' code-switching (n = 29)

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1. I prefer when the instructor uses English language for technical terms and non-technical terms.	51.72	41.38	6.90	0	0
2. The instructors' code-switching help facilitate better understand to the lessons.	51.72	37.93	10.35	0	0
3. The instructors' code-switching makes me feel satisfied with my learning.	62.07	37.93	0	0	0
4. The instructors' code-switching helps me to develop my learning ability.	44.83	31.03	24.14	0	0
5. The instructors' code-switching help promote students' engagement.	44.83	37.93	17.24	0	0
6. It would be beneficial for me to learn new English vocabularies through instructor's code-switching.	41.38	41.38	17.24	0	0
7. I am not confident when the instructor switches to English for technical terms and non-technical terms.	44.83	44.83	10.34	0	0
8. In my opinion, I think the instructors switch the language mainly for the benefits of the students.	48.28	37.93	13.79	0	0

Table 6 Level of agreement based on students' TOEIC scores

Psychological benefits towards the use of instructors' code-switching	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Interpretation
Low proficient English level students (n = 211) (TOEIC scores 5 - 400)	2.35	0.96	Disagree
Average to proficient English level students (n = 29) (TOEIC scores 405 - 990)	4.36	0.69	Agree

The analysis of the data indicated that there was a significant difference in the attitudes of low proficient and average to proficient students towards the code-switching in terms of psychological benefits as the majority of low proficient students seemed to disagree on its outcomes while the average to proficient English level students expressed their desired result. The result was similar to a number of researchers who believed that.

Code-switching was far more preferred among the average to proficient students at 93.10%, while 63.03% of low proficient did not agree so. The average to proficient students believed that code-switching could assist them in comprehending the lectures in term of helping facilitated better understood to the lessons at 89.65%, making them feel satisfied with their learning at 100%, helping to develop their learning ability at 75.86%, and promoting students' engagement at 82.76%. Whilst low proficient students showed the counterproductive results at 62.08%, 49.28%, 52.13% and 58.76% respectively.

Nearly 83% of the average to proficient students indicated that they preferred the instructors to code-switch in class so that they could learn new English vocabularies, however, only 10.90% of the low proficient students preferred the instructors to use code-switching for the same reason.

Almost 90% of the average to proficient students showed their confidence if the instructor switched to the English language for technical terms and non-technical terms, while almost 58% of the low proficient students showed their lack of confidence with those terms. It was noticed that 86.21% of the average to proficient students expressed their positive opinion towards the benefits of code-switching, which was opposite from low proficient students' opinion, as 47.40% of them did not see any benefits of code-switching.

4.3 Code-switching and students' learning success

The result of the analysis showed that average to proficient students perceived their learning success was related to the use of code-switching by the instructors. In contrast, the low proficient students did not agree that their learning success was related to the instructors' use of code-switching.

Table 7 Less proficient students' learning success in term of effective learning outcomes (n = 211)

	Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1.	The instructors' code-switching helps me better understand the terminology.	0.95	18.48	40.28	31.75	8.54
2.	The instructors' code-switching helps me understand the terminology that sound confused when are conveyed in Thai.	1.90	17.06	34.12	36.49	10.43
3.	The instructors' code-switching encourages me to build up new English vocabularies.	1.41	19.91	33.18	38.86	6.64
4.	The instructors' code-switching help strengthen my understanding of the lessons.	1.90	5.69	29.38	32.70	30.33
5.	The instructors' code-switching facilitates my learning ability throughout the course.	2.37	5.21	32.23	35.07	25.12

Table 8 Average to proficient students' learning success in term of effective learning outcomes (n = 29)

	Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1.	The instructors' code-switching helps me better understand the terminology.	41.38	34.48	17.24	6.90	0
2.	The instructors' code-switching helps me understand the terminology that sound confused when are conveyed in Thai.	41.38	24.14	31.03	3.45	0
3.	The instructors' code-switching encourages me to build up new English vocabularies.	58.62	24.14	13.79	3.45	0
4.	The instructors' code-switching help strengthen my understanding of the lessons.	41.38	41.38	10.34	6.90	0
5.	The instructors' code-switching facilitates my learning ability throughout the course.	44.82	24.14	27.59	3.45	0

Table 9 Level of agreement based on students' TOEIC scores

Students' learning success in term of effective learning outcomes	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Interpretation
Low proficient English level students (n = 211) (TOEIC scores 5 - 400)	2.49	0.94	Disagree
Average to proficient English level students (n = 29) (TOEIC scores 405 - 990)	4.16	0.91	Agree

The data revealed that there was a difference in learning success from the use of code-switching between low proficient students and average to proficient students. 75.86% of the average to high proficient students thought that they could comprehend the terminology with the use of code-switching, while less than 20% of the low proficient students acknowledged that code-switching helped them better understood the terminology. 65.52% of the average to proficient students believed that code-switching assisted them in understanding the terminology that sounds confused when they were conveyed in Thai. Nevertheless, 46.92% from the low proficient students' point of view, disagreed that code-switching assisted them in understanding the terminology that sound confused when they were conveyed in Thai. A total of 82.76% of

the average to proficient students stated that code-switching encourages them to build up new English vocabularies and also help strengthen their understanding of the lessons. Moreover, 68.96% stated that the instructors' code-switching facilitated their learning ability throughout the course. Whilst the figures were noted for low proficient students which showed the counterproductive results at 45.50%, 63.03% and 60.19% respectively.

5. Conclusion

Thailand is a country where English is not an official language. Therefore, Thai people do not have much opportunity to use English in their everyday life, as for this reason, English language can frequently be used as a medium of communication in the education context. This study found that English-Thai code-switching for both technical terms and non-technical terms was extensively and frequently used by instructors in Aviation Safety & Security course and In-flight Service course at the College of Aviation Development and Training. According to the interview, instructors deliberately use code-switching are mainly for the favors of the Airline Business students in term of psychological benefits and the effectiveness of students' learning success towards the aforementioned subjects.

The arithmetic mean of the frequency distribution for the average to proficient English students; based on their TOEIC score between 405 – 990 on the psychological benefits of code-switching showed their agreement at 4.36 out of 5.00 on the Likert scale and 4.16 out of 5.00 on the Likert scale for the agreement on their learning success in term of effective learning outcomes. Most students at this level held a positive attitude towards the instructors' code-switching that assisted them in comprehending the subject matter as well as the activities they engage in. Nevertheless, the low proficient English students; based on their TOEIC score between 5 – 400 revealed their counterproductive result. Most students at this level held a negative attitude of disagreement, not only on the psychological benefits of code-switch at 2.35 out of 5.00 on the Likert scale but also on the learning success in term of effective learning outcomes at 2.49 out of 5.00 on the Likert scale.

Meanwhile the English-Thai code-switching is unavoidable when aviation technical terms were mentioned during the discourse in both subjects, as for the non-technical terms, the English-Thai code-switching can be used at various frequency depend on the majority of the English competency level of those students that the instructors need to apply their judgement and consideration. This survey is consistent with the previous study of Svendsen (2014) which discussed the conflict of whether or not code-switching is a useful language strategy, and also, of how it should be used in the classroom context.

Apparently, the English proficiency of Thai students is low in all four skills as referred in the report from ETS (2016), Thai examinees' TOEFL scores were low compared to other countries in Southeast Asia (e.g. Malaysia, Philippines, Myanmar, and Singapore). Even in the English class where the Thai language is used at some points to assist the students to better understand the lessons. Hence, many Thai instructors; for other subjects than English subject found it even harder to deliver their lectures in English despite their good intention to increase the level of English exposure for all students, especially for Airline Business students.

As for average to proficient students, code-switching is considered a beneficial strategy pertains to students' language development. The recommendations to this research are that in a class where the majority of students have low English proficiency the code-switching is still considered a beneficial method to allow the students to build up new vocabularies and become more familiar with the English language. However, it is necessary for the lecturers to know the language level of the students and when to use the code switching during their discourse.

Whilst the research paper studied by Sert (2005), in his paper disclosed that code-switching in the language classroom is not always beneficial in learning a language. Some researchers believe that code-switching may be considered as a useful technique in classroom interaction if the aim is to make meaning clear and to transfer the knowledge to students in an efficient way.

Hence, it is suggested that the result should be calibrated with other universities that are running Airline Business course and also it is recommended that the research should be cross-conducted with another program such as Hotel Management or Tourism Management where the level of English exposure for all Thai students are required to be increased.

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