

## Code-Switching Identification Amongst Adult Spanish Learners in Online English Language Class

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores code-switching among adult Spanish-speaking learners in an online ESL setting. Through qualitative observation and discourse analysis, eight functions were identified: specific topic of conversation, clarification and repetition, communicative efficiency, translation strategy, participation encouragement, identity expression, interjection, and quotation. Learners used Spanish to express culturally embedded ideas and resolve lexical gaps, while teachers facilitated understanding through targeted translation. References to *Papá Noel* and *Reyes Magos* highlight how switching reflects cultural pride and supports meaning-making. Findings suggest that code-switching enhances learner engagement, affirms identity, and fosters pedagogical clarity, making it a powerful tool in bilingual instruction.

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## INTRODUCTION

Code switching is a major subject in the field of sociolinguistics focusing on the switch of language amongst bilingual or multilingual communities. This subject has been considered as one of phenomena explaining the usage of a lot of languages in social context (Fachriyah, 2017). Bilingualism takes possession to be described as comprehending two languages (Valdez & Figueora, 1994). In the community of bilingualism, Fachriyah (2017) expounds that the bilingual speakers possess a tendency to switch languages in conversations they discuss. This includes language learning or acquiring a foreign/second language.

The code switching's occurrences can also be found in a foreign language's teaching-learning setting, specifically English language class (Yusuf, 2009). According to Jamshidi & Navehebrahim (2013), code switching has the purpose to help students with communication problems in language learning class, especially EFL (or ESL). As mentioned by the two theories of language acquisition in class, the ESL class can do code-switching in an online class setting.

The internet development has changed the setting of learning activity from traditional face-to-face to online (Lasnumanda & Tarigan, 2020). In the context of English learning, online learning is considered more comfortable and helpful. However, the phenomenon of code-switching can be inseparable with any setting of language learning even though the innovation of situational setting in learning English has evolved to be online. Hence, code-switching could happen in online settings as some of the studies have proven that.

On the other hand, the latest study, by Pratama. (2022), shows about the types and functions in code-switching in online English pragmatics class. The study specifically aimed to demonstrate the learning-teaching processes in a senior high school during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing only on how bilingual interaction is conducted in English classes using certain online video streaming and meeting platforms. In this research, the writer also illustrates the circumstances that compelled everyone to be adept in code-switching and code-mixing when necessary. Thus, this research conversely differs from the cited study, providing data of the participants with older age range and more diverse backgrounds, on top of that, the discourse revolving around Spanish-English realms.

There are some, or even few, studies about code-switching in online settings as found in accord with the availability. Idana (2021) finds that there are acts of code-switching in online class. In the study, she focuses on seeking for the types and functions that EFL teachers code-switches in Junior High School during the COVID-19. The researcher found that intersentential-switching was the most dominant code-switching type among the other three. It happened because mostly the code-switching practised by the teachers occurs after the complete sentence or at either clause or between the sentences in one language. The language that switched to Bahasa Indonesia in the teachers' utterances mostly occurred in different clauses or sentences within the English sentence.

Another study by Pontillas *et al.* (2022) looks for the types and effects of EFL online learning. The study was conducted in a college environment in the Philippines, illustrating three different code-switching types which were used during the classes in English Language Studies, with tag-switching emerging as

the most frequent in the practices, followed by intra-sentential and intersentential. Along with the types, the study also expounded mostly positive effects of code-switching, which positively scaled up the students' thinking ability and confidence in comprehending complex ideas in English. Presently, this research altered to the referenced study by Pontillas, giving further analysis on how different code-switching functions are held and applied in online English class by grown students with professional backgrounds.

Since only few studies have successfully been found in accordance with the studies of code-switching in online learning, this study explores the analysis of functions in code-switching in the ESL online class. However, As other studies are found focusing on the (junior) high school students and university students, the subject that the study focuses on is mainly on adult Spanish-speaking learners in Spain. In this regard, the study remains a distinct academic work since it analyses different participants with different academic backgrounds. At this point they enroll in the ESL class in an online institution based in Indonesia. In accordance with the analysis of what language is involved, the study is totally different from the previous study mentioned since the respondents only speak Spanish and English. The current study fills a gap by examining code-switching specifically among adult Spanish-speaking learners in an online ESL class setting. Unlike prior research, the focus here is on Spanish-English switching, offering a distinct linguistic perspective.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Sinaga & Hutahaeen (2020) narrates that the condition of code switching happens when a language speaker switches from one language to another. In addition, Ohia (2023) traces that this behavioral act of switching a language occurs in a bilingual setting. Bloomfield (1935) defines that bilingualism represents capability of speaking two languages or having native-levelled of two languages.

Code switching's occurrences are prevalent in a foreign language teaching-learning settings, specifically English language classes. Fachriyah (2017) images that code switching emerges in English classes, and the switching possesses various kinds of languages. Further, Yusuf (2009) states that the phenomenon of code-switching depends on different circumstances, backgrounds, and reasons. On the other hand, Heller (2007) narrates that this code-switching strategy has involvement in using styles of language either to strengthen or weaken different types of communication. These include: request, refusal, topic changes, descriptions, comments, confirmations, etc. These types solidify the use of code-switching in terms of its functions.

### *Functions of Code-Switching*

Code-switching is based on the intention of speakers to express what is in their mind, including when learning English. Therefore, the utterance reflects functions of which code-switching becomes the reason to switch. Tajudin (2013) and Uys and van Dulm (2011) elaborate the functions to exemplify and reflect reason in switching, especially in the context of learning situations.

Tajudin (2013) identifies code-switching as a communicative tool that serves several functional purposes in conversation, particularly within multilingual or bilingual learning settings. The primary functions outlined in Tajudin's framework include: (1) Specific topic of conversation; (2) Quoting somebody else; (3) Being emphatic about something; (4) Interjection; (5) Repetition for clarification; (6) Intention of clarifying the speech content for interlocutor; (7) Expressing group identity; (8) Softening or strengthening request/command; (9) Real lexical need; and (10) Communicative efficiency. Meanwhile, the functions conveyed by Uys and van Dul (2011) consist of: (11) Explaining and Clarifying subject content; (12) Assisting learners in understanding and interpreting materials; (13) Encouraging participation; and (14) Social functions (e.g. humor or identity). However, these functions show similarity and overlap each other. At this point, these functions are classified into some joint aspects in terms of the definitions. The definitions hence include: (1) Specific topic of conversation; (2) Quotation; (3) Emphatic expression; (4) Interjection; (5) Clarification in teaching-learning situations; (6) Communicative efficiency for interpreting materials; (7) Encouraging participation and (8) Expressing identity as a social function.

#### *Specific Topic of Conversation*

Learners code-switch when discussing topics that are particular in a conversation. Rahayu et al. (2021) expresses this aspect by giving an example below:

Data 1 (Rahayu et al., 2021)

“Actually students are eager to have real internship experience, *tetapi karena keadaan yang tidak memungkinkan dan itu dapat membahayakan kesehatan diri sendiri dan orang lain* (but due to uncertain situations and it can be harmful for their health and the others), we improvise because we have no better option.”  
(Rahayu et al. (2021)'s Data 26)

According to Rahayu et al. (2021), this conversation talks about an internship situation amongst students at the workplace. At this point, a specific condition such as health is mentioned in Indonesian, and the situation is decided to be changed or improved in English. This therefore reflects that there is a decision made for a specific topic, in this case, about students and their working situations.

#### *Clarification (in teaching situations)*

Code-switching helps clarify meaning when learners tend to misunderstand the meaning or definition of vocabulary. In other words, Moore (2010) states that code-switching is intended to bridge gaps and enhance understanding. For example, it is likely possible for the teacher to switch back and forth between L1 and L2 to ensure the listener understands. This kind of classroom is common in bilingual classes. Here is one of the examples taken from findings below:

Data 2 (Kasim, Yusuf & Ningsih, 2021)

*"Studying kan dari belajar, Pak, from experience, dari pengalaman, dan juga dari pemikiran mereka."* (Studying is also from learning, Sir, from experience, from experience, and also from their thoughts).

In the data, the repeated the phrase "from experience" to Indonesian *dari pengalaman* that has a function as a translation. The switch was conducted when the students experienced difficult situations and hardly understood the English words uttered during the class.

#### ***Group Identity Expression***

Code-switching is also a sociolinguistic signal. It reflects group belonging and cultural identity (Tajudin, 2013; Uys & van Dulm, 2011). In supporting the statement, Rahayu et al. (2021) elaborates a reflection of cultural or religious identity. In her findings, Arabic phrases, such as *"Innalillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un"* (every living creature will be coming back to their god) are used to express condolences when someone has passed away. The phrase is not only for occasional situations, but also reflects the identity of a Muslim—including in Indonesia—showing that the utterance is deeply rooted in the religious values and teachings of Islam.

#### ***Empathy and Emotion***

Speakers may switch codes when expressing strong feelings, humour, or sympathy. For learners, the need to express their understanding of new ideas to the teacher in a language that allows them to adequately convey their feelings and ask questions intelligibly without being misunderstood or embarrassed, compels them to code switch in most learning situations (Ezeh et al, 2023). Emotional content is often easier or more authentic in one's native language. This often shows when learners express frustration or affection in L1, even in an L2 setting. Rahayu et al. (2021) illustrate the code-switched interaction related to showing emotional conscience in their findings, for example:

Data 3 (Rahayu et al., 2021)

*"I'm sorry mam, belum bisa gabung ((I) cannot join yet)...I have a bad signal there."*

The text message explicitly shows a frustration which is uttered in L1 (Indonesian), saying he or she was unable to join/attend the class due to a bad internet network.

#### ***Emphasis (Commands or Strong Statements)***

Switching to L1 is used for emphasis, especially in giving directions, warnings, or instructions. The switch signals importance or urgency. The study by Bravo-Sotelo & Metila (2023) identifies "Emphasising a Mathematics Concept" as one of the key subtypes under the Ideational Function of teacher code-switching. To reinforce key mathematical ideas or rules through repetition and strategic use of the students' L1 (Tagalog), making the concept stand out more clearly and be better understood. Here is the finding:

Data 4 (Bravo-Sotelo & Metila, 2023)

**Student (S):** "So the answer is cosine 59 degrees 7 minutes and zero seconds."

**Teacher (T1):** "Okay. So by the way, 'zero seconds' here is no longer written. Okay? So *okay na siya kahit wala na 'yan kasi zero naman siya.*" (So that is okay even though it's not there because it's zero anyway.)

The teacher restates and reinforces the rule using Taglish (Tagalog-English mix) to ensure students grasp the convention of omitting zero seconds. Key emphasis is placed on "*okay na siya kahit wala na 'yan*" and "*zero naman siya*", which communicates assurance and clarity in a more relatable tone. This repetition through code-switching grabs attention and helps learners internalize a technical detail of mathematical notation.

### *Communicative efficiency for interpreting materials*

Ezeh et al. (2022) define that second language teaching and learning involve the pragmatics of code switching and code mixing, whereby the teacher consciously or unconsciously switches from one language to another or mixes certain linguistic items of two or more languages in a communicative context to achieve certain pedagogic purposes - primarily to facilitate the learning of complex language contents and achieve retention amongst students- especially in a second language situation.

Learners and teachers switch to the first language to interpret unfamiliar words or concepts, especially when learners lack sufficient vocabulary. In conducting effective communication, teachers implement translation methods in teaching. Samardali and Ismael (2017) postulated in their study that the use of translation becomes frequent and necessary when it comes to clarifying things, namely, giving instructions, warning, and addressing L1 interference errors in the classroom. It acts as a bridge between the known (L1) and the new (L2). For instance, Samardali and Ismael exemplify a switch of Spanish-English: "*el crochet... it is knitwear.*"

Another example is shown by Bravo-Sotelo and Metila (2023), who examine communicative efficiency, particularly in the context of interpreting materials, framed through what they mention as the Communicative Function of classroom code-switching. This goes beyond pedagogical structure and is seen more as a natural flow of expression. The teachers' use of code-switching in Filipino bilingual classrooms, especially where English is used as the language of instruction, but students speak Tagalog as their L1. For example:

Data 4 (Bravo-Sotelo & Metila, 2023)

"*O,ano na'ng nangyari sa path n'ya?* (What happened to its path?) What does it form? *Isa s'yang ...?* (It's a...?) *Isa s'yang ...?* (It's a...?) – *Tawag dito?* (What do you call this?) – region *na mayroong width at length* (region with width and length). How many dimensions?"

In the data, the teacher code-switches mid-sentence from English to Tagalog when unable to recall the term "rectangle" or "plane". Rather than being distracted and halted from explaining the lesson, the teacher described the object in accessible terms using L1, maintaining instructional momentum.

### ***Encouraging Participation***

According to Novianti and Said (2021), code-mixing is utilized as a strategic tool to engage students in classroom discussion by capturing their attention. When the teachers blend languages during instruction, it sparks learners' focus and interest, making the lesson more accessible and easier to understand. This gesture also helps students to enhance connection and bonding with the teacher, hence, shifting to a more relaxed and nuanced classroom environment. This code-mixing is considered effective and appropriate as the learners are introduced to foreign terms and expected to get familiar with the utterances in day-to-day classroom interaction. Thus, internalizing unfamiliar terms becomes possible through a non-theoretical learning method.

Data 5 (Novianti & Said, 2021)

*"Nanti saya akan re-explain ya."* (I will re-explain it later, okay)

The code happens within the sentence, *"Nanti saya akan re-explain ya."* The teacher inserted an English word into an Indonesian utterance. The teacher did the code in order to catch the students' attention. The teacher did the code to certain words that were much less familiar to the students. Thus, it would make the students feel anxious; thus, they would pay attention to the teacher.

### ***Quotation***

Gumperz (1982) describes quotations in code-switching referring to either a direct quotation or a reported speech. At this point, Usman et al (2019) states an example of quotation in their research about thesis defence examination between a student and lecturers. Here is the data below:

Data 6 (Usman et al, 2019)

*Okay. Itu yang saya tanyakan atau saya koreksi, kan? Sekarang, dalam bulan puasa ni supaya banyak pahala, err Ahmad harus berikan sesuatu pada kami, ya. Ya. Sekarang tutup ini, oke tutup. Berikan sesuatu pada kami. Seperti, "Pak, you know, my research is very interesting. This is the best one..."*

*"Okay. That is the one that I asked (earlier) and corrected, right? Now, in this Ramadhan month, so that you will receive many rewards (from God), err Ahmad (you) must give us something. Yes. Now close your defence. Give something to us. Like, "Sir, you know, my research is very interesting. This is the best one..."*

Here, the teacher switches to English temporarily to share a saying or phrase exactly as it was originally used or heard. That act of inserting the original expression is what quotation refers to in this framework. This switch preserves the emotional nuance of the quoted phrase by shifting from the speaker's own words to someone else's.

### ***Conceptual Frameworks and Research Questions***

This study retrieves the functional frameworks of code-switching proposed by Tajudin (2013) and Uys and van Dulm (2011). Because of the

overlapping of some classifications, several functions have been merged and structured into a more concise classification scheme, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Tajudin (2013) introduces ten key functions of code-switching, including:

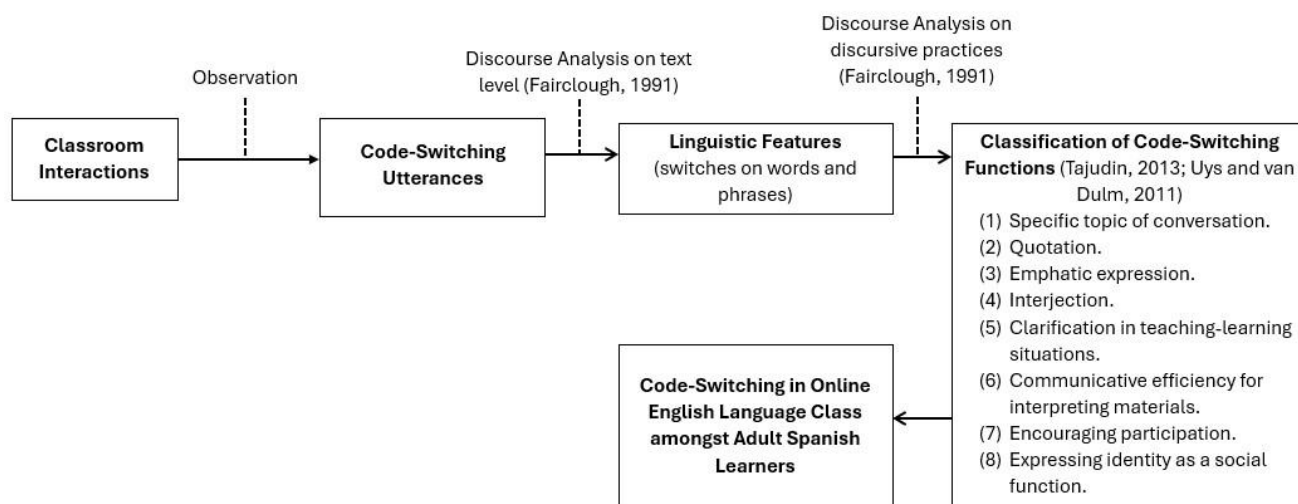
- (1) Specific topic of conversation;
- (2) Quoting somebody else;
- (3) Being emphatic about something;
- (4) Interjection;
- (5) Repetition for clarification;
- (6) Intention of clarifying the speech content for interlocutor;
- (7) Expressing group identity;
- (8) Softening or strengthening request/command;
- (9) Real lexical need; and
- (10) Communicative efficiency.

Meanwhile, Uys and van Dulm (2011) pinpoint pedagogical and social functions, such as:

- (1) Explaining and Clarifying subject content;
- (2) Assisting learners in understanding and interpreting materials;
- (3) Encouraging participation; and
- (4) Social functions (e.g. humor or identity).

These frameworks are structured to guide the functional analysis of code-switching in this study. Accordingly, this study draws on the research by the following central question:

“How do adult learners employ code-switching to serve specific communicative and educational functions?”



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Code-switching in This Study**

## METHODOLOGY

The study investigated the phenomenon of code-switching in terms of the functions in EFL online class. To this extent, the study applied to qualitative study provided by Creswell and Creswell (2023). In this case, field note-taking was decided to scrutinize the code-switching phenomenon through qualitative observation. The reason behind was that recordings were not allowed therefore

the transcription could be allowed through manual note-taking. At this point, the researchers joined in as a part of a complete participation observation in which they possess double roles as both teachers and observers. To collect data, there were two adult Spanish-speaking learners included in two disparate one-on-one online classes. Consequently, the classes were conducted in full English with Spanish-English switching. The data collection is further elaborated below.

As data were obtained from the notes, the researchers initiated the data collection by doing online teaching activities. Once the code-switching was found, the researchers took notes on a document app by typing the utterances. Afterwards, as the whole activities were recorded in textual data, codification was conducted through numbering the data starting from 1. In this case, the numeration started from 1 and followed the order in which the functions of code-switching were identified, hence this study arranged the framework structure based on the sequence in which data emerged. In terms of linguistic features, since there were only two languages found (Spanish and English), the utterances/structures in Spanish were italic, while English structures remained in normal texts. In addition to considering the privacy that they concern, the names of participants were abbreviated reversibly (G.E. and L.M.) and marked with Ln. (learner) 1 (for G.E.) and Ln. (learner) 2 (L.M.) in the data result part.

The data analysis was conducted by implementing descriptive discourse analysis. At this point, the researchers preferred Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (1995) by adapting the theory to focus only on two dimensional frameworks: text analysis and discursive practices. Text analysis was to purposefully explore the linguistic features of code-switching. Meanwhile, discursive practices were applied to determine the functions of code-switching used by the speakers in context. Specifically, this study drew the analysis on the frameworks of code-switching's functions proposed by Tajudin (2013) and Uys and van Dulm (2011). However, due to overlapping functions observed in the two studies, these frameworks were modified. Therefore, the adapted frameworks included: (1) Specific topic of conversation; (2) Quotation; (3) Emphatic expression; (4) Interjection; (5) Clarification in teaching-learning situations; (6) Communicative efficiency for interpreting materials; (7) Encouraging participation; and (8) Expressing identity as a social function.

## **RESEARCH RESULT**

This section provides the results of the code-switching functions. In addition, the functions would be provided in data formed in conversational sentences; the code-switching happened in 2 languages: English and Spanish (italicized). As the data drawn, Ln. 1 refers to Learner 1, Ln. 2 referred to Learner 2, and Tr. referred to the teacher.

### ***Functions of Code-Switching***

There were aspects found in the research according to the theoretical framework proposed by Tajudin (2013) and Uys and van Dulm (2011) as the basis for this study. The findings were drawn in detail.

### ***Specific topic of conversation***

In the class, there were lots of conversational topics discussed to enhance the Spanish's English ability. However, some of the topics were not described in English by the learners at all. Hence, the conversation sometimes got code-switched into English. It included some particular topics that they had. Here is the example:

Data 1

Ln. 2: "When we celebrated Christmas, he had some trees, songs, and, err, *Papá Noel*, you know err.....Father Christmas, Santa Claus!"

Ln. 2: "We also have the story of ... *Reyes Magos*, erm, the Three Wise Men."

According to the data, Learners 2 expressed the description of how Christmas is celebrated in Spanish culture. However, she found it difficult to say Santa Claus and the Three Wise Men in English in the beginning, so she used Spanish words *Papá Noel* and *Reyes Magos* before she learnt the English phrases regarding the topic of Christmas.

### ***Clarification (in Teaching Situations)***

Clarification and repetition were the two functions of code-switching, having the same purpose as previous studies had depicted them. As found in the class, the Spanish learners were predisposed to repeat and clarify what they said in two languages: Spanish and English. Here are several examples:

Data 2

Ln. 1: "His song is like, err *espera*, wait [searching for the song]. *Esta*, in Spanish is this ...." (His song is like, err, (you) wait, wait. This, in Spanish is this.....)

In accordance with Data 2, the Ln. 1 stated twice the words repetition to clarify about her utterance in two languages. As shown in the data, she initially said "*espera*", then she clearly confirms to change the Spanish word "*espera*" with the English word "wait". In addition, the same pattern occurred on the Spanish "*esta*" for the English "this". Supporting the first data, the same patterns showed similarity as follows:

Data 3

Ln. 2: "The student went, *bueno*, well, to the school....." (The student went, well, well, to the school.....)

According to the above data, the Ln. 2 shows the same recurrence as Ln. 1 as she mentions "*bueno*" then confirms the word with the English "well".

### ***Communicative efficiency for interpreting materials***

Uys and van Dulm (2011) emphasized that students sometimes have difficulties when communicating ideas. To solve the problems, communicative efficiency became the answer in English class for each of the Spanish learners. Here are the examples:

Data 4

Ln. 1: "We usually wear *el crochet*, you know, *aver*, it is knitwear." (We usually wear knitwear, you know, let us see, it is knitwear.)

Data 5

Ln. 2: "My work was a bit difficult, because of my.....*como se dice de ordenador*, err computer." (My work was a bit difficult, because my.....how do you say computer, err computer.)

In this context, on Data 4 and Data 5, they successfully found out the definitions shortly before the teacher helped them. It was obvious that this function was similar in clarifying things to effectively communicate in English. Meanwhile, the following data provided another example of how the teacher assisted them to find the answer in English. Here was the example:

Data 6

Ln. 2: "The ornament of the art is made from err...*madera*, you know, like table."

Tr.: "Do you mean from the tree, wood, or wooden materials?"

Ln. 2: "ah *sí, bueno!*" [yes, right!]

Based on Data 6, the Learner 2 hardly discovered the word "*madera*" to say wood or wooden materials in English. In this case, the teacher gave assistance to the Learner what they did not understand in expressing the ideas.

### ***Participation Encouragement***

Another role of the code-switch was the use of participation encouragement (Tajudin, 2013; Uys & van Dulm, 2011). It offered the students the assistance to grasp language's contents and to make students pay attention to the class. In this study, the teacher played a significant role in assisting the words and phrases and errors related to the first language interference. Here is one example:

Data 7

Ln. 1: "I like *tranquila* music."

Tr.: "Oh, do you mean tranquil music? Or in a simple term, relaxing music?"

Ln. 1: "Ah, yes."

As drawn in Data 7, Learner 1 wanted to talk about the music she likes to listen to. On the data, she faced the interference from the Spanish word "*tranquila*" which was similar to the English "tranquil". In such a manner, the teacher translated the term into English and added the most commonly used and simple phrase "relaxing music". On Data 8 below, there was also a similarity when the teacher tried to clarify the terms in English to help her understand and pay attention to the class. Here is the other example:

Data 8

**Line 1** Ln. 2 : " At home, I want to order a *libraria* for my books."

**Line 2** Tr. : "Oh do you want to buy a library set?"

**Line 3** Ln. 2 : “No, the smaller one, *estanteria*.”

**Line 4** Tr. : “Oh, that is a bookshelf.”

**Líne 5** Ln. 2 : “*Sí*, yes.”

From the conversation, it was shown that the learner heavily relied on her teacher’s answer or assistance at this point. As a result, the teacher gave out not only a translation but also the accurate phrase that matches the word “*estanteria*”, which is a bookshelf. Thus, as seen in Line 5, the given confirmation response of the learner indicated enthusiasm.

### ***Expression of Identity***

In case of class situations, this part of code-switching functions rarely appeared when the Spanish learners spoke in English. Here are the examples taken from Data 9:

Data 9

Ln. 2: “When we celebrated Christmas, he had some trees, songs, and, err, *Papá Noel*, you know err.....Father Christmas, Santa Claus!”

Ln. 2: “We also have the story of ... *Reyes Magos*, erm, the Three Wise Men.”

These lines were related to the topic of Christmas explained as in the function of a specific topic of code-switching. However, the lines also represented the pride of Spanish people about how they celebrated the religious commemoration by practising the culture they adopted. It included the way of defining the culture that they consider to be their expressions of terminology: *Papá Noel* and *Reyes Magos*.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study reveals multifaceted functions of code-switching among adult Spanish-speaking learners in an online ESL context. Through descriptive discourse analysis, five prominent functions emerged: (1) **Specific topic of conversation**, where learners resorted to Spanish to express culturally embedded concepts like *Papá Noel* and *Reyes Magos* before locating their English equivalents; (2) **Clarification and repetition**, illustrated by strategic bilingual reiterations to resolve lexical uncertainty and facilitate comprehension; (3) **Communicative efficiency**, enabling learners and teachers to overcome vocabulary limitations by switching languages mid-utterance without disrupting instructional flow; (4) **Encouragement of participation**, where the teacher used translation and gentle corrections to sustain learners’ engagement and elicit their responses; (5) **Expression of identity**, evident in learners’ reference to cultural holidays and traditions that reinforced belonging while navigating second-language discourse. Together, these functions reflect a dynamic, socially embedded learning environment where code-switching serves both pedagogical and personal purposes.

Building upon these findings, the present discussion connects each observed function with relevant theoretical frameworks and prior research. The emergence of cultural markers such as *Papá Noel* and *Reyes Magos* not only exemplifies topic specificity but also illustrates identity expression—a dual

function recognized by Tajudin (2013) and Rahayu et al. (2021). In these moments, learners affirm the distinctiveness of Spanish traditions while engaging in linguistic negotiation. In relation to Spanish culture, the definition of Papá Noel is described as a bearded old man with a red suit on and gifts which is similar to Santa Claus (Cambridge Spanish-English Dictionary, 2014). Meanwhile, Reyes Magos is the Spanish Christmas tradition celebrated on every January 6th which tells about The Three Wise Men or The Three Kings who are more considerably believed to give the presents to children (Hudec, 2020).

As the research discussion proposed by Kasim, Yusuf, and Ningsih (2021) and Gumperz (1982), clarification in teaching situations is defined as clarifying some of the elements of discourse topics, which are discussed by re-explaining them bilingually. Likewise, clarification and repetition – observed when learners switched between Spanish and English terms like *espera/wait* and *esta/this* – serve as linguistic anchors. These practices echo the findings of Kasim, Yusuf, and Ningsih (2019), who emphasize that reiteration and clarification enhance comprehension and help avoid miscommunication in multilingual classrooms. In conclusion, the two learners attempt to repeat and then to clarify what they say about some topics of conversation in the two languages. This supports the theory of Tajudin (2013), as also mentioned in the previous studies (Kasim, Yusuf, & Ningsih, 2021; Gumperz, 1982; Mohamad, 2022; Moore, 2010). To this extent, the frequent use of Spanish words appears more dominantly in switching the elements (words or phrases) of English conversation before the learners switch the words/phrases back.

Moreover, communicative efficiency appeared frequently, particularly when learners encountered language barriers and responded with spontaneous switches – as in *el crochet* to “knitwear” or *como se dice de ordenador* to “computer.” These instances show how switching helps preserve fluency and instructional momentum, aligning with Uys and van Dulm’s (2011) perspective on pragmatic pedagogical strategies. Participation encouragement followed similar contours: learners were engaged through reformulated prompts, and teacher scaffolding helped guide learners from approximate phrases (*tranquila music, libreria*) to precise English expressions (*relaxing music, bookshelf*). These exchanges show how code-switching not only maintains attention but builds confidence in learners as they navigate L2 discourse.

This study is similar to Uys and van Dulm (2011) as Nurhamidah, Fauziati, and Supriyadi (2018) also discuss that two languages can bring the two options of ideas from two languages. In this way, the teacher possesses basic ability to comprehend some of vocabulary comprehension in Spanish as he sometimes uses translation machines as well to help the Spanish learners. Due to the ability of the Spanish’s first language that the teacher has, this helps him to find alternative ways to teach the students by translating as a strategy of language learning use as discussed afterwards.

Therefore, this result’s finding supports the term of functions proposed by Tajudin (2013) and some parts of translation used in teaching Samardali and Ismael (2017): elaborating the definition of new words and phrases and improving structure in relation to L1 interference errors. Samardali and Ismael

(2017) states that the functions of translation are: enlightening about grammatical issues, teaching idioms, determining passages, and checking students' understanding in reading and listening skills.

This study supports the theory findings by Tajudin (2013). It also stands for the findings of Rahayu, et al. (2021) which they discuss about speakers' attitude in utterance to say some Arabic words/phrases in order to reveal their Islamic identity.

Taken together, these five functions underline the adaptive power of code-switching in bilingual instruction. They move beyond surface-level translation and reveal deeper cognitive, cultural, and pedagogical strategies used by learners and teachers alike in navigating multilingual meaning-making.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study offers a comprehensive insight into the functional dimensions of code-switching among adult Spanish-speaking learners in an online ESL environment. Drawing on qualitative observation and discourse analysis, eight key functions emerged: specific topic of conversation, clarification and repetition, communicative efficiency, translation strategy use, participation encouragement, expression of identity, interjection, and quotation. These findings reaffirm the pedagogical and sociolinguistic significance of code-switching – not as a sign of linguistic deficiency but as a purposeful tool that enriches communication, sustains learner engagement, and validates cultural narratives in second-language acquisition.

Learners navigated unfamiliar vocabulary and complex content by leveraging both Spanish and English, often switching mid-utterance to clarify meaning or regain fluency. Teachers played a central role in shaping this bilingual interaction, using translation and reformulation to scaffold understanding and encourage participation. The learners' references to culturally embedded expressions – like *Papá Noel*, *Reyes Magos*, and *madera* – not only served functional clarity but also reflected an underlying pride and linguistic identity. These expressions highlight how code-switching facilitates emotional and cognitive connection, even across digital borders.

Given these findings, several recommendations are proposed:

- For educators: Foster code-switching as a dynamic instructional strategy. Allow space for learners to express uncertainty, emotion, or cultural affiliation through bilingual interaction without penalizing or suppressing their L1.
- For language institutions and program designers: Integrate culturally responsive materials and activities that allow learners to negotiate meaning across languages. Designing tasks that blend translation, storytelling, and concept-building can deepen learner engagement and vocabulary acquisition.
- For future research: Extend the scope to diverse age groups, linguistic pairings, and platforms to better understand developmental shifts and sociocultural influences on code-switching behavior. Longitudinal and mixed-method approaches could uncover patterns over time and across settings.

Ultimately, this study affirms that code-switching is not merely a communicative workaround—it is a reflection of learner agency, cognitive adaptability, and cultural voice. In bilingual instruction, especially online, its thoughtful integration can flourish both pedagogical rigor and personal resonance.

### **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

While this study provides valuable insights into the functions of code-switching in online ESL commands, certain limitations must be considered. First, the sample size was limited to only two adult Spanish students, which constrains the generalizability of the findings. The one-on-one class formats, even though rich in data, may not reflect larger learning settings. In addition, the data collected was done manually due to unavailability of reading permits. These limitations constrain elaboration of subtle details such as tone, intonations, and spontaneous verbal response, which are critical in discourse analysis.

Another limitation lies in the narrow focus of this study, as it is restricted to the Spanish-English linguistic scope. This restriction hardly causes the study to gain more linguistic exposure, especially when it comes to multilingual settings. Furthermore, the researchers' double roles as a teacher and observer may appeal to subjectivity despite the tendency to maintain objectivity in the note-taking and analysis.

Given these limitations, future research could expand the participant pool, with more varied language backgrounds and proficiency in order to better capture the broader uses of code-switching practices. On top of that, gaining permission to video or audio record would ensure a deeper insight into how learners' profiles influence code-switching behavior during participation in wider language learning settings.

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