

THE PEDAGOGICAL POTENTIAL OF CODE SWITCHING IN ESL CLASSROOMS

Renee Lee Yi Ki

(Supervisor: Prof. Derek H. L. Chan)

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the pedagogical role of code switching in ESL classrooms where the first language (L1) of students is Cantonese. Aiming at addressing ESL teaching environment in both applied linguistics and sociolinguistics domains, this study collects and analyses data gathered in secondary ESL classrooms in Hong Kong. Class observation and questionnaire are adopted to collect data, which has been analyzed and turned into meaningful statistics and information. The findings demonstrate that CS has been extensively and purposefully used as a pedagogical tool in local ESL classrooms. Despite criticism on CS practice in existing literature, the overall findings indicate that most ESL teachers support and consider CS as an efficient strategy of ESL teaching and learning. When the teacher and students share the same L1, there is a tendency for the teacher to CS for encouraging and establishing rapport with students, raising awareness of English Language usage through comparison, guiding interpretation, motivating students and promoting interactions, and achieving efficiency. Thus, CS is found useful in facilitating grammar and semantic aspect of linguistic knowledge among ESL learners. This study calls for enhanced awareness of the pedagogical potential of CS in ESL classrooms, so that ESL education policy can be adjusted wisely and sensibly.

REFLECTION

This project represents the end of my fruitful undergraduate studies as an English major. Bilingualism, Psycholinguistics, and Sociolinguistics were the most inspiring courses I took in the past that led me to the topic of this project. I see this topic as one that closely connects to my future teaching career. Engaging in research for the project offered me authentic first-hand information on the current situation of CS usage in Hong Kong ESL education. From working on the project, I have discovered the potential of CS in ESL education context and realized that teachers CS when teaching and interacting with students to serve a wide variety of pedagogical purposes in ESL classrooms. I believe the knowledge in these areas will assist me in better decision making on CS as an ESL teacher myself in the future.