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Code-Switching in a Legal English Class for Egyptian Learners: A Conversation Analysis Case Study

Melinda Dooly
Department of Language, Literature and Social Science Education, Faculty of Education
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain
Corresponding Author: melindaann.dooly@uab.cat

Ola Bakri
Department of Teaching of Language, Literature and Social Sciences, Faculty of Education
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain
Email: olabakri03@gmail.com

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Abstract

This article addresses how code-switching facilitates language acquisition in an online legal English classroom for Arabic-speaking learners. The study aims to describe and analyze the use of code-switching as a facilitative resource for second language acquisition, particularly within the context of the online classroom. The article holds significance in two key areas: first, it contributes to the existing literature on code-switching between Arabic and English in language learning contexts. Second, it addresses a gap in research by focusing on an underexplored context: online legal English classes for Arabic-speaking learners, a topic which has not been widely researched. Applying Conversation Analysis to fragments from the online class, the findings reveal that code-switching serves as a vital resource for learners in comprehending complex legal concepts by drawing on their first language (L1) knowledge (in this case, Arabic). It also facilitates word searching, collaborative learning, and effective negotiation of meaning, aiding in the overall second language (L2) acquisition process.

Keywords: Conversation analysis, code-switching, ESP, legal English, online teaching and learning, Egyptian learners

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Introduction

Studying code-switching (CS) in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classroom interaction can help teachers determine the effective use of CS by understanding how and why code-switching occurs. It can also be used to explicitly demonstrate to learners where CS may be common in professional settings, thereby helping them develop communicative competence. Some experts on CS have pointed out that code-switching in the classroom often signifies varying strategies across different communicative settings (Creese, 2005; Moore & Llompart, 2019). This includes scenarios such as *exolingual* contexts, where participants' competencies may be uneven or asymmetrical, and plurilingual contexts, where individuals who are proficient in multiple languages possess comparable or symmetric language competencies (Lüdi, 1989; Unamuno, 2008). Close examination of these strategies can help teachers identify the different ways in which their learners deploy their diverse linguistic repertoires to better understand what is occurring in the lesson. Code-switching in ESP contexts can also serve pragmatic functions such as clarification, emphasis, or rapport-building. Analyzing these functions in talk-in-interaction can be insightful to ESP teachers regarding how these functions are best supported. Understanding the role of code-switching in ESP classrooms may help educators to develop targeted pedagogical strategies.

The present study investigates the use of CS in a virtual legal English class among Egyptian learners in informal, online language classes. Applying Conversation Analysis (CA) to transcribed fragments of the online lessons, this study illustrates the unfolding of teacher and learner interaction in detail to understand its complexity and to describe CS moves made by the teacher and learner to scaffold learning, collaborate in tasks, and negotiate meaning. Data are transcribed according to CA conventions (Jefferson, 2004). To the best of the authors' knowledge, no previous studies have investigated the legal English register conducted in a digital environment. The significance of this research comes from the context of the study (Arabic speakers in an online classroom), the method of analysis (Conversation Analysis), and the subject studied (legal English as the ESP target). Moreover, there have not been recent studies that apply CA to CS, in particular in lesser-studied languages such as Arabic.

There have been various definitions proposed for code switching and code mixing by many scholars. One of the most influential scholars on language use, Hymes (1971), defines code-switching as “a common term for alternative use of two or more languages, varieties of a language or even speech styles” (cited in Mabule, 2015, p. 340). According to Crystal (1987), code-switching or language-switching takes place when bilingual individuals alternate two languages during their speech (mentioned in Mabule, 2015). Another key scholar in CS, Auer, proceeding from Gumperz's interactional approach to CS, defined it as “alternating use of two or more codes within one conversational episode” (1998, p.1). In this paper, following Gardner-Chloros (2009), the authors will refer to changes between languages as code-switching (rather than language-switching) because “code” is frequently used nowadays by linguists as an “umbrella term for languages, dialects, styles etc” (Gardner-Chloros, 2009, p. 11, cited in Brezjanovic-Shogren, 2002,

p. 21). In recent years, "code-switching" is often favored over "language-switching" because it conceptualizes more than just switching between different languages. In this sense, CS refers to the practice of alternating between two or more languages or dialects within a single conversation or interaction, thereby acknowledging the nuanced ways plurilingual individuals navigate between linguistic codes. Therefore, it is felt that code-switching better captures the complexity and fluidity of language use in diverse linguistic contexts.

Nonetheless, as Boztepe (2003) points out, "CS is plagued by the thorny issue of terminological confusion" (p. 4), in particular between the terms "code-switching, code-mixing, borrowing, or code-alternation" (Ibid.). It is not within the scope of this article to discuss the disparities in positions regarding these terms, however, it is important to underscore that CS in this article is understood from a sociolinguistic, micro-perspective. That is, CS is seen as a strategic resource that plurilingual speakers have, which can be deployed to achieve a variety of purposes in the mutually constructed interaction of the participants.

For many, code-switching has been seen as a "highly stigmatized form of conversation" (Boztepe, 2003, p. 2) and considered "as a deviation from some norm" (p. 3), therefore somehow indicative of a deficient speaker. As Mabule (2015) explains, some researchers view it as “a chaotic practice” (p. 340) and an indication of L2 low proficiency (Mabule, 2015). However, in this study, CS is seen as reflecting plurilingual individuals’ proficiency in multiple languages, and it can include either full sentences and/or words. Studying code-switching in a legal English classroom can significantly impact pedagogical research by providing insights into how plurilingual learners leverage their different language resources to comprehend complex, specialized content. This understanding can inform language teaching strategies, particularly in ESP contexts, by highlighting the role of code-switching as a tool for facilitating comprehension, collaboration, and negotiation of meaning.

Literature Review

Conversation Analysis and Code-switching

As previously described, definitions that refer to the use of different linguistic resources vary, yet they commonly incorporate the notion of "code," a term appropriated by linguists from the realm of communication technology (Gardner-Chloros, 2009, p.11). This term denotes

> a mechanism for the unambiguous transduction of signals between systems, akin to how shifting between languages is commonly employed by plurilingual speaker-listeners in communication. Hence, the term "code" is frequently employed by linguists as a comprehensive concept encompassing languages, dialects, styles, and related phenomena. (Gardner-Chloros, 2009, p.11)

The authors are aware of the arguments against the use of the term code-switching when carrying out Conversation Analysis. First, because CA prioritizes the study of talk-in-interaction and the sequential organization of conversation, the term code-switching can imply a focus on linguistic codes or systems, thus diverting attention away from the sequential and interactional aspects of

talk. Using the term "code-switching" may also implicitly categorize linguistic practices within conversations as discrete and predefined "codes" or languages, thus overlooking the fluid and context-dependent nature of language use in interaction. Use of the term may also risk overlooking the interactional functions of language alternation, framing it primarily as a linguistic phenomenon rather than a social action as well as disregarding participants' local understandings and interpretations of their talk.

However, following Auer's (1984, 1995, 1998) focus on CS as a discourse strategy, it can also be argued that the term opens itself up to linguistic diversity by acknowledging and studying the intentional alternation between different linguistic codes or varieties within the conversation. From these perspectives, researchers can better understand how speakers utilize their linguistic repertoires in social interaction. CS can be viewed as a demonstration of speakers' plurilingual competence in multiple linguistic codes or varieties (Masats, et al., 2007; Unamuno, 2003, 2008). Analyzing instances of CS allows researchers to explore how speakers strategically draw upon different linguistic resources to achieve communicative goals and navigate complex social contexts (Mondada, 2007). Finally, through the strategic use of different linguistic codes or varieties, speakers may construct, negotiate, and display various aspects of their social identities, affiliations, and relationships with interlocutors, including collaborative learning (Sert, 2005; Unamuno, 2008).

The CA approach to bilingual interaction differs from other sociolinguistic models by focusing on the collaborative achievements of conversation participants rather than quantitative structures. This ties into social constructivist theories, which have suggested that to meet current educational requirements learning must be collaborative and social (Bruffee, 1995; Dooly, 2018; Dooly & Masats, 2020; Todorovski, et al. 2015). Applying a CA approach to the data allows the researchers to 'unpack' the collaborative interaction that takes place in this online ESP classroom to observe what the interlocutors attend to and to provide insight into how they interpret what they are saying and doing (Schegloff 2007; Sacks 1984), in this case, what they are accomplishing through CS. Thus, this article follows the basic principles of CA (cf. Seedhouse 2004), e.g. tracking actions sequentially on an action-by-action basis, through a participant-oriented (emic) lens. This entails uncovering the CS actions of the ESP learners (L1 Arabic) as they engage with teacher instructions, and deal with lexical gaps while mutually collaborating through affiliative learner talk.

Code-switching in Language and ESP Classes

There have been a some recent studies on CS in ESP contexts. Yuniswati (2018) concluded that ESP teachers use CS in the classroom as a facilitative and effective tool for scaffolding learning activities. Promnath and Tayjasanant (2016) and Shujing (2013) also found the use of CS to be a necessary tool in ESP classes on pedagogical and sociolinguistic grounds, arguing that it is extensively used in ESP classes. Applying stimulated recall interview strategies and CA, Zainil and Arsyad (2021) explored teachers' beliefs and understandings of their CS practices in the

classroom, revealing that CS has pedagogical and affective functions. Using questionnaires and interviews, Setyowati (2023) looked at teachers' and learners' perspectives on CS, concluding that both groups felt that CS helped the learners advance their knowledge of the language. Haryanti, et al. (2018) found the use of CS in the foreign language classroom ubiquitous and inevitable, covering functions such as explaining grammar, managing the classroom, indexing "stances of empathy or solidarity" (p. 466), translating words and providing support for better understanding or to underscore a specific point. As regards the topic of this article, there has been far less research into CS and legal English classrooms. A notable exception is the study by Minh Nguyen (2022), which focuses mostly on teachers' beliefs regarding CS but does not consider learners' use of CS.

CS in L2 classrooms (not specific to ESP) are more abundant. It has been argued that CS gives learners an advantage by providing them with back-up language when they cannot recall a word, which leads to word searches. As Lüdi (2003) explains, translingual switches often happen when interlocutors want to avoid communication breakdown (as cited in Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain, 2023). Teik and Lian (2013) and Fennema-Bloom (2010) categorized CS as a facilitative device to create more solidarity and participation. Teik and Lian (2013) mentioned 12 facilitative functions, for example, enhancing students' learning, compensating for the lack of exact equivalents in the target language, facilitating lessons for students with low English competency, and processing the meaning by alleviating students' cognitive load. They also indicated the affective functions of CS, such as improving solidarity between teachers and students, establishing a productive and encouraging learning environment, and providing goodwill and support. Along these lines, this study examines the use of code-switching as a facilitative resource for English (L2) acquisition.

Methodology

The approach used for this study is Conversation Analysis (CA). The basic premise of CA is to systematically study the structure, organization, and dynamics of natural conversation (Sacks, 1984; Schegloff, 2007). CA focuses on how people engage in interaction, including turn-taking, repair, sequence organization, and preference structure, to collaboratively construct meaning and accomplish social actions (Sert, 2015). By analyzing the transcribed talk, CA aims to uncover the systematic ways in which participants manage and coordinate their interactions to achieve mutual understanding and accomplish their communicative goals (Mondada, 2007).

The transcription key can be found in the annexe. The Arabic talk is followed by grey italicized font the transliterated pronunciation of the Arabic words and the English translation is underlined in grey directly below the transliteration. Due to difficulties in formatting, the Arabic sentences are aligned the same as the rest of the text in the article.

Fragments for analysis were chosen according to these criteria: 1) they are part of larger, naturally occurring sequences; the context before and after the selected fragments have been considered to maintain the integrity of the interaction. 2) They constitute relevant data that includes CS and represent (as much as possible) all of the participants in the interaction. 3) They have

sufficient audio quality to be transcribed accurately. 4) They do not include interactions that are off-topic or not directly related to the lesson. 5) They were reviewed by both authors and a third external party.

Participants

The data are the recordings of an online course given by a female instructor through Zoom to three adult male learners during 2020-2021. The course was initially under the umbrella of the American University in Cairo (AUC), although later the three students moved to a private course taught by the instructor. The three students are all in the legal field; one of them is a prosecutor and the other two work in companies as legal advisors/lawyers. The number of sessions for this course is 10 (n=10). Each session is 1.5 hours approximately. The instructor is also the researcher referred to as Ola (co-author of this article). The teacher/researcher lived in a country different from the learners during the time of data collection. All the learners gave prior consent to use the data for PhD research purposes. The researcher has used pseudonyms for the three learners: Fareed, Hussein and Safa. Before obtaining consent, an ethics protocol was elaborated according to *The European Charter for Researchers* (EU, 2005), which included informing the learners of the study (its purpose, data management procedures and assurance the learners could withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions on their lessons).

The American University in Cairo (AUC) has a structure of two legal certificates directed to legal professionals and students. The first three levels are introductory. The second three are advanced. Before registering for the introductory courses, students should pass a score of B2 on an English placement test. These learners' English proficiency is B2 (upper intermediate), according to CEFR descriptors (2020). The content of the course was based on a legal English textbook and collaborative tasks designed by the instructor for each session. The sessions varied between book-based and task-based sessions.

Analysis of the Talk-in-Interaction

We now consider the first transcribed fragment through a CA lens. Because the fragment is long, it has been divided into 4 sections, each sub-fragment is labelled as 1a, 1b, 1c or 1d. However, they should be understood as continuous and in the actual transcription occurred in this order and without breaks in the interaction. Because CA applies a fine-grained focus on the interaction, we discuss each fragment separately before presenting a summary of findings of the entire fragment. The same format is applied to the fragment and third fragments, both of which come from a different lesson. Finally, general findings are provided.

Fragment 1a. ***Isaal Amana***

Participants: Fareed, Safa, Hussein (students), Ola (teacher)

1	FAR:	We can file a case ah:: separately than this about the cheques about ah:: ايصالات الأمانة
2		(.) what do we call it↑

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Isalaat amana
bonds

4 HUS: XXX
5 FAR: الحقنا ياصفي اسمها ايه؟ ↑
elh'na ya Safa esmha eeh↑
help us Safa (.) what's it called↑
6 SAF: هههههه (.) مش عارف الصراحة هههههه نسيت
hahaha (.) mesh 'araf el saraha hahaha nseet
ha ha ha (.) honestly I don't know ha ha ah I forgot
7 FAR: °hahahaha°

In this first fragment, Fareed is explaining a legal concept in English about filing cheques when interactional trouble emerges regarding the meaning of إيصالات امانة *isalaat amana* (bonds). In line 1, Fareed first signals the interactional trouble with an utterance "ah", followed by a code switch to Arabic for the word 'bonds'. After a very brief pause, Fareed then uses English again to indicate an epistemic stance of 'not knowing' (Mondada, 2011; Koole, 2010) in the form of a request for help: what do we call it? (line 2). Hussein responds, although his answer is indistinguishable, to which Fareed then changes once more to Arabic and positions Safa as a potential epistemic source and appears to 'Other-select' Safa as an intralinguistic mediator in line 5, saying in Arabic: Help us Safa, what's it called? Interestingly, Fareed indexes Safa with epistemic authority (Heritage, 2013) instead of the teacher, who would supposedly have epistemic access to resolve the interactional trouble. In this way, Fareed turns the activity into a collaborative activity between the learners.

Fareed's choice of code also 'exerts an influence on subsequent language choices by the same or other speakers' (Auer 1984, p.5 as cited in Wei, 1998) and demonstrates affiliation on an affective level (Stivers, et al., 2011). Safa responds with laughter and answers in Arabic, denying epistemic authority (Kärkkäinen, 2003) with the epistemic marker "I don't know (..) I forgot". Fareed reciprocates laughter in line 7, in what Jefferson (1979) and Jefferson, et al. (1987) have termed 'shared laughter'. In this sense, Fareed and Safa's shared laughter constitutes a social activity, perhaps indicating a mutual orientation towards a lack of epistemic access to the target language (legal English). The shared laughter also seems to signal affiliation between the two learners on an affective level.

This affiliation is further displayed in line 8 (below) when Safa, in Arabic, self-allocates the turn and takes a collaborative learner stance to state that together (we) can find the answer. Fareed then 'backflags' (the use of a societal discourse marker; Treffers-Daller, 2022) to begin his turn in line 9 with a typical expression in Arabic (*y'aani*) before re-establishing the instructional preferred language of English. In line 10, Hussein, who had not been 'Other-selected' as an intralinguistic mediator earlier, self-allocates the turn to provide a repair to Safa's lack of knowledge (Goffman, 1981) and offers a candidate response: it is a trust receipt.

Fragment 1b. ***Isaal amana***

8 SAF: بس ممكن نلاقيها يعني
bas momken nla'eeha y'aani
but we can find it

9 FAR: يعني يعني we we can file a case (.) for cheques
y'aani y'aani
That is that is

10 HUS: =it is a (.) trust receipt or ((he seems to be reading an answer, perhaps searched on google))

Hussein's intralinguistic mediation then triggers Safa and Hussein to negotiate the accuracy of the term *trust receipt* offered by Hussein over extended turns in lines 11-14 (below). The word search that was initiated in line 2 by Fareed unfolds as a learning activity as the two participants engage in a collaborative sense-making activity for several turns. In line 11, Safa employs a stronger epistemic stance discourse marker in English 'I think' (Heritage, 2012) which is interrupted by Hussein's latched utterance in line 12, repeating the proffered term. Safa then completes his sentence in line 13, first repeating the Arabic phrase *y'aani* then switching once more to English to argue against the term *trust receipt* because it is not a legal expression. In line 14 Hussein then repeats Safa's assessment of the term and finishes his line with an acknowledgement token, 'right'.

Fragment 1c. ***Isaal Amana***

11 SAF: =I [think]

12 HUS: =a [trust] receipt

13 SAF: = يعني a trust receipt دي aaaaa it isn't a legal aaaa expression
y'aani *di*
that is this

14 HUS: =it's not legal information, right.

15 SAF: ah ((mumbling)) ° بس ممكن ° aa#
bas momken
it can be
(0.7)

16 FAR: اه هكتبها اهو ايصال أمانة ه
ah haktebha aho isaal amana ha
ah I will write it as trust receipt
(0.13)

17 FAR: لا ماأظنش trust receipt دي it's not
La' ma adhonish *di*
no I don't think this

In line 15, Safa then appears to engage in self-talk at the same time as he switches to Arabic, indicating doubt about his own argument that trust receipt is not the correct answer. In the next 2 lines, Fareed engages in a similar back-and-forth with himself, first stating in Arabic that he will

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write the words 'trust receipt' (arguably checking it online in a search engine) and then, using an epistemic marker in Arabic (I don't think), he argues that the term is not correct.

This triggers laughter from Hussein (line 18, below). Significantly, it was Hussein who first provided the candidate response of trust receipt in line 10 (above) but he now downplays the proposal with a post-laughter response in Arabic: it's a very literal translation. Fareed then reframes the sequence as playful by joking about 'Uncle Google' (line 21) in Arabic, signalling the affiliation between the learners, and conveying solidarity in the language task at hand. Then, in line 23, there is teacher-initiated code-switching to the target language of the class, although she also uses the Arabic word for *bond* as typing is heard in the background. Finally, in lines 24 and 25, the teacher orients the students to a different task (fragment 2, below).

Fragment 1d. ***Isaal amana***

18	HUS:	هههه
		Hahaha
		Hahaha
19	FAR:	اهه/
		aah
20	HUS:	ترجمة حرفية جدا
		targma hrfyya gedan
		it's a very literal translation
21	FAR:	ترجمة حرفية بتاعة عمك جوجل مش هينفع
		targama hrfyya bt'aet 'amak google mesh hynfa'
		it's a literal translation of your uncle google, it's not going to work
22	HUS:	اه
		ah
		ah
23	OLA:	إيصال أمانة I am trying to find إيصال امانة
		the meaning of إيصال امانة as well ((the sound of typing))
		isaal amana isaal amana isaal amana
		bond bond bond
24		ANYHOW, thank you very much for that (.) aaaa let's aaaa let's ايه go back , طيب يعني
25		I will search for it while you go for the second case study
		eeh y'aani Tayyab
		What that is OK

Brief Summary and Discussion (Fragment 1)

The first fragment illustrates the dynamic use of code-switching among the participants during a collaborative learning activity. Fareed initiates a code switch to Arabic when encountering interactional trouble, signalling a need for assistance. He then 'Other-selects' Safa as an intralinguistic mediator, demonstrating a willingness to engage in a collaborative sense-making activity. Shared laughter between Fareed and Safa indicates affiliation on an affective level, further

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strengthening their collaborative stance. As the discussion unfolds, the participants code-switch to negotiate the meaning of terms in the target language (much of which is peer talk in Arabic) to resolve the interactional trouble. Overall, the use of language switching facilitates mutual understanding and solidarity among the learners, ultimately contributing to their collaborative learning experience, although there is never a final agreement regarding the target term of *isaal amana*.

Fragment 2: Write off

Participants: Fareed, Safa, Hussein (students), Ola (teacher)

This second fragment proceeds from a different online lesson. The teacher, Ola, is explaining specific terms that will be needed for the upcoming exercise. The terms being discussed are numbered in the textbook. She starts by inquiring about the meaning of "write off".

Fragment 2a: Write off

1	OLA:	after we're after that write off (0.3) eh any guessings↑ ((some background noise))
2	HUS:	yes (.) of course (.) this is the (.) easiest one hahaha
3	OLA:	the easiest one↑ haha
4	HUS:	it is to cancel yes number six to cancel or record (.) to cancel the record of a bad
5		[debt]
6	OLA:	[and]
7	HUS:	=and I hope it's fine ((humorous tone))
8	OLA:	and eh Mr. Fareed and Safa (.) do you have the same answer↑

In line 1, the teacher marks the transition into another vocabulary search by asking the learners to guess the meaning of 'write off'. Hussein self-allocates the turn but does not answer directly, instead, he jokes that it is 'the easiest one' (line 2) while positioning himself as a 'knowing' recipient. Perhaps because he has not responded directly, the teacher repeats his joke (line 3) and joins in the laughter but does not re-allocate anyone to provide an answer to what the term means. In line 4, Hussein provides the answer, but the teacher does not provide a confirmation token immediately so in line 7, Hussein expands on his turn to add "I hope it's fine", again in a humorous tone. The teacher's response is still not a confirmation in line 8; instead, she elicits confirmation from the other participants in an indirect epistemic status check (Sert, 2015).

Participants break into a side sequence about the proficiency of Safa as an expert in legal terms. Then, Safa elaborates on a legal concept explaining the difference between the English and the Arabic meaning of this concept. These interactions take 26 turns. The next part starts after these 26 turns. Fareed orients back to the institutional task and goal: getting the meaning of write-off (Drew & Heritage, 1992 as cited in Tudini & Dooly, 2021). The teacher responds with 'write off', which does not correctly answer Fareed's question.

Fragment 2b: Write off

34 FAR: ايه↑ number هتبقي ايه write off طب
eeh htb'a eeh tab
what will be what OK
35 OLA: write off
(0.2)
36 HUS: انا قلت ((coughing, clears throat)) ah:::
Ana qlt
I said
37 SAF: (I think) it's number 6
38 OLA: exactly as Hussein said number 6 and especially write off is connected with bad debt (.)
39 bad debt it means

After a slight pause, both Hussein and Safa attempt to provide a repair to Fareed's lack of knowledge (Goffman, 1981) in lieu of the teacher. Hussein appears to begin to reformulate his previous answer in Arabic but Safa interrupts to provide Fareed with the answer (in English), although he does so with a downgraded epistemic status marker: I think (line 37). In line 38, Ola then initiates embedded repair work in English (Seedhouse, 2004; Sert, 2015) to elaborate on their answers and provide a more detailed answer that includes both the number and definition of the targeted term.

In line 40 (below), Safa appears to accept Ola's repair, responding with the token 'OK'. In a post-turn expansion, the teacher further elaborates on the meaning of the term, emphasizing the amount of debt involved in a 'write off': "hu:::ge debt huge it's not a trivial sum of money it's huge debt". Hussein contributes a similar remark regarding the amount before he is interrupted by Safa in line 42 in overlapping speech and deploying a dispreferred response (no-no) to indicate a misalignment with the turns (Pomerantz & Heritage, 2013) while also appearing to quietly provide a rationale for his interruption ("I want to add"). Safa's displays an epistemic stance of 'unknowing' despite maintaining his interaction in the target language of the classroom (English).

In this same turn, Safa directly addresses the teacher (ya Ola?) who responds with a token 'huh'? in line 44. However, this turn sequence is interrupted once more by Hussein in line 45, who provides a post-turn expansion on the previous turns in lines 41 and 42. The teacher aligns to Hussein's turn with an affirmation 'exactly' (line 47) as she shapes the learner contributions (Can Daşkın, 2015) towards a wider understanding of the term 'write off'. This continues for the next adjacency pair as Hussein further elaborates his answer and the teacher provides affirmation in multiply repeated tokens of 'yes' (lines 48 and 49).

Fragment 2c: Write off

40 SAF: OK=
41 OLA: =hu:::ge debt huge it's not a trivial sum of money it's huge debt
42 HUS: it's huge and the: and [the:::]
43 SAF: [no no] °I want to add° ya Ola↑
44 OLA: huh↑=

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45 HUS: =and the debtor I mean and the debtor [can't is not] (.) is not likely to pay all of it
46 SAF: [I think]
47 OLA: exactly=
48 HUS: =doesn't have enough (XXX)
49 OLA: >yes yes yes yes<

At this point, Fareed self-allocates the turn (line 50, below) to ask a task-oriented question, (identifying the meaning of 'write off' in Arabic). In line 51, Safa offers a response, in English, to Fareed's answer, stating that it is called 'bad debt' (in English), although he downgrades his epistemic status through soft intonation of the words. This appears to confuse the teacher (line 52) and Safa repeats, this time with a creaky voice, that the answer is 'bad debt in Arabic' (line 53). Ola does not appear to accept Safa's response and she reformulates the question in line 54, however, she seems to self-repair mid-sentence as she re-directs Safa to request clarification of exactly what he was stating (or asking, it is not clear). In line 55 Safa, as the recipient of the trouble source in the interaction, other-initiates an other-repair as a bid for turn: Excuse me?

The teacher responds with a somewhat ambiguous question in line 56: What's called in Arabic? which could be taken as a direct request for clarification of the word in Arabic or as an indirect request for repetition of Safa's turn in line 53. This ambiguity in meaning triggers two different answers from both Fareed (write-off, referring to the original search term in line 1 onwards) and Safa who replies 'bad debt' (line 58). Ola does not appear to understand as she responds with a mitigated nonpreferred response (Rees-Miller, 2000) in line 59. Safa then self-repairs, providing the Arabic word for 'bad debt'. The teacher repeats the word in Arabic (line 61) to which both Safa and Hussein provide token words, in Arabic, of confirmation (lines 62 and 63). At this point, in line 64, Safa uses Arabic to draw attention to a problem (his feeling of frustration in the unfolding of the learning process) and to address a practical issue related to the management of the learning activity (Unamuno, 2008).

Fragment 2d: Write off

50 FAR: ↑ ايه اسمها بالعربي تبقي (0.5) write off عايزين نقول يعني
y'aani 'ayzeen n'oul (0.5) Tb'a bel 'arabi esmha eeh↑
That is we want to say (0.5) What do we call it in Arabic?↑
51 SAF: it's called in Arabic °bad debt°
52 OLA: aaa it's [called] in Ara=
53 SAF: = bad debt↑ #in Arabic#
54 OLA: it's called in Arabic ايه ياصفي Safa what ah:=
eeh ya Safa
What Safa
55 SAF: =excuse me↑
56 OLA: what's called in Arabic↑
57 FAR: write off=
58 SAF: =bad debt

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59 OLA: ah ha
60 SAF: bad debt in Arabic it's called ديون معدومة
duyun maeduma
bad debt
61 OLA: <ديون معدومة>
<duyun maeduma>
<bad debt>
62 SAF: يعني
y'aani
that is
63 HUS: ايوه بالظبط =
ayuh bialzabt
yes, exactly
64 SAF: مش هقدر احصلها كده كده
kadah kadah mesh haqadir Ahsulha
I won't be able to get it like this
65 OLA: OK

Brief Summary and Discussion (Fragment 2):

In the classroom interaction described, CS occurs when Fareed switches between Arabic and English while seeking clarification on the number associated with the correct answer. This switch perhaps indicates his urgency to communicate more effectively with the teacher. However, the teacher's response in English does not directly address Fareed's query, leading to further confusion. Additionally, Safa engages in CS when offering a response to Fareed's query, initially providing an answer in English ("bad debt"), and then clarifying it in Arabic. This switch reflects Safa's attempt to bridge linguistic gaps and ensure comprehension among his peers. However, this switch also contributes to the misunderstanding, as the teacher does not immediately grasp the intended meaning, prompting Safa to self-repair and provide the Arabic term for "bad debt" to facilitate comprehension.

The analysis shows that the alternation of languages affected the sequence organization. Different from fragment 1, code-switching to Arabic was principally related to word search, with less negotiation of meaning and more direct focus on finding definitions in Arabic. There is also very little affiliative talk through code-switching as was displayed in fragment 1 although the learners do display collaborative learning as Hussein and Safa aim to support Fareed's understanding of the target term proposed by the teacher.

Fragment 3. Back to write-off
Fareed, Safa, Hussein (students), Ola (teacher)

The next fragment occurs in the same lesson although a bit later in the lesson. The participants had moved to different topics before returning to the issue of the term 'write off'.

Fragment 3a. Back to write-off

66 FAR: يعني write off دي اسمها ايه back to write off (xxx)
y'aani write off esmha eh
that is what do we call write off?

67 SAF: دي كده كده انا بخصمها من الميزانية بتاعة الشركة لان انا مش هعرف احصلها =
Di keda keda ana bkhsemha min el mizanyya bt'aet el shreka lyn ana mesh ha'raf ahslha
These debts are deducted from the company's budget because I won't be able to collect

68 OLA: OK,او او او =
aw aw aw
or or or

69 SAF: تتخصم من ضرايبي كمان =
ttkhesem min daraybi Kaman
Deducted from my taxes as well

70 OLA: a:::h OK OK

71 SAF: يعني أنا [لما]
Yaani ana lama
That is when I

72 HUS: ↑ بقي يامستر صفي verbال [طب]
b*'aa ya Mr. Safa tab el*
OK what about the verb? so tell us ya Mr. Safa

73 SAF: ↑ ال ايه
al eh
What

74 HUS: عشان احولها لديون معدومة بقول ايه verbال in Arabic بتاع الديون المعدومة
'ashan ahwlha li duyun maedumih b'oul eeh El verb bta'a el duyun maedumih
to transfer the debts to bad debts what do I say the verb of bad debt (in Arabic)

75 say ah:: to ah:: **بقولها ازاي بالعربي** (.) ولا ↑ مثلا اعدام الدين
e'dam el daen mathlan wala (.) b'oulha ezay bel 'arabi
cancelling the debt for example or *(.)* how do I say it in Arabic?

76 ↑ولا تحويلها الي ديون معدومة
Wala tahwelha illa duyun maedumih
or transferring it to bad debt

77 OLA: ↑شطب شطب مثلا, شطب
shatb mathlan, shatb
cross out for example, cross out, cross out

78 SAF: لا **ايوه**=
la' aywah

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no yes
79 OLA: شطب ↑
shatb↑
cross out↑
80 SAF: لا انت انت بتيجي بتيجي مثلا
la enta enta enta bteegi beteegi mathlan
no you you you come come for example
(0.2)
81 SAF: يعني معلش sorry لو هتكلم بالعربي
y'aani malesh sorry lw htklam bel arabi
so excuse me if I am talking in Arabic
82 OLA: OK

In line 66, Fareed re-orients the classroom interaction back to the institutional task, using a mix of both Arabic as a lexical tag (y'aani') at the pre-turn position, perhaps to create an affiliation with the other peers and also using Arabic as the main directive of the question ('what do we call it)? Safa responds with a complete and long utterance in Arabic, providing an extensive explanation of the consequences of 'write off'. The teacher gives another mitigated dispreferred response in both English and Arabic (ok (.) or or or) to which Safa elaborates on his response, again in Arabic. This response is accepted by the teacher with a confirmation token in line 70 however Safa endeavours to hold the turn, using the Arabic expression *y'anni* once more and then starts a post-turn expansion in line 71. There is an overlap of Safa and Hussein's utterances in lines 71 and 72 as Hussein interrupts him (predominantly in Arabic) to ask him a direct grammatical question 'What about the verb' (verb is in English, perhaps to emphasize the word itself.

This very direct question is mitigated with Hussein's use of 'so tell us Mr. Safa' (in Arabic) as a humorous device to lessen the force of his criticism (Schegloff, 2007) and potentially positioning himself as deficient in knowledge to 'Mr Safa' (the title 'Mr.' is in English). In this way, Hussein's dispreferred response is "not destructive to the smooth progression of the social interaction or to the social solidarity of interactants" (Wu, 2021, p. 168). Safa provides the second pair part of the question-answer adjacency pair initiated by Hussein with a very long response, almost completely in Arabic (except for the insertion of 'In Arabic' in English at the beginning of his turn). Hussein varies his questions to make sure Safa understands him, 'what do I say' and 'how do I say it' (lines 74-75).

The teacher responds to Hussein with a candidate response in Arabic "cross out" (line 77), but Safa seems to challenge the teacher's epistemic authority in line 78 (no yes) and then more forcefully in line 80 before apologizing for using Arabic (line 81), perhaps an act of mitigating the initial forcefulness. Ola offers a token 'ok' in line 82. In situations such as this online class, the allocation of knowledge is regularly negotiated, at times challenged and "reflexively (re)elaborated by the participants in social interaction" (Mondada, 2013, p. 597). In this case, this distribution principally takes place in Arabic.

Further on in this same extract, Fareed, once more aims to orient the participants back to the institutional task at hand (Tudini & Dooly, 2021), addressing the others principally in Arabic except for the target lexeme (line 83): OK *write off*, if we want to put it in a sentence, what do we say?

Fragment 3b. Back to write off

83	FAR:	↑ ايه دي عايزين نحطها في جملة كده نقول write off [طب]
		Tab write off di 'ayzeen noht'ha fi gomla keda n'oul eeh
		OK write off if we want to put it in a sentence, what do we say?
84	OLA:	I I can can give you I can give you a sentence for it Mr. Fareed
85	SAF:	هي this sentence is is correct/ write off considerable a: sum
		Hya
		This
86		يعني دي مظبوطة بالظبط علي !!!!!!
		Y'aani di madbota bel dabt 'ala aaaa
		That is to say this is appropriate on aaaa
87	FAR:	considerable sum دي يعني شطب write off يعني
		y'aani write off di y'aani shatb considerable sum
		That is to say write off means crossing out considerable sum
88		↑ يعني شطب مبالغ معتبرة
		y'aani shatb mabalagh moatbra
		That is to say crossing out considerable sum
89	SAF:	unsecured unsecured creditors OK↑ (.) بص حضرتك هنا كان بيتكلم علي
		bos hadretak hena kan bytklam 'ala
		He was talking about
90		creditors some of whom will have to write off considerable sums
91		يعني أنا هعدم الديون بتاعتهم لان انا مش هعرف مش هعرف احصلها
		ya'ani ana ha'edam alduyun bitaeatihim lan ana mish haeraf aihsulha
		That is to say I will cancel their debts because I can't collect them
92	OLA:	Uhm
93	FAR:	↑ اعدم write off يعني
		Yaani write off e'dam
		That is to say write off means cancelling
94	SAF:	ah=
95	OLA:	= شطب شطب او اعدام
		shatb shatb aw e'dam
		Cross out/write off or cancelling
96	FAR:	شطب
		Shatb
		Write off/cross out
97	OLA:	شطب او اعدام اه اه ((different voices speaking together can be heard))
		shatb aw e'dam ah ah

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Write off/cross out or cancel

98 SAF: هي الديون المعدومة bad debt ال
el bad debt hya duyun maedumih
The bad debt is the bad debt

0.5

99 FAR: ↑considerable sums امال هو قصده
omal howa ‘asdo considerable sums
So he means considerable sums

0.3

100 FAR يعني ديون معتبرة↑
y‘aani *duyun* mo‘atbra
That is to say considerable/big debts

101 OLA: no::: (.) big (.) considerable it means big

102 SAF: big big considerable it means big huge ah:: (0.1) huge money ah::: huge Amount

103 FAR: طب ماشي والله احنا ياجماعة بنستفيد منكم جامد والله
Tab mashy (.)Wallahi ehna bnstafeed mnkoum gamed walahi
OK (.) good (.) I swear by Allah that we benefit a lot from you

Ola completes the question-answer adjacency pair in English and in the next turn, Safa produces an epistemic status check, first in English (line 85) and then in Arabic (line 86) to ensure that he has the correct answer. Fareed's candidate clause triggers further negotiation, in a mix of Arabic and English, about the precision of the term and its applicability to the case being studied (lines 87-88). The discussion is increasingly more complex and brings in new target lexemes (unsecured creditors, line 89). Finally, in line 93, Fareed (who had initiated the sequence in line 66) seems to attempt to close the sequence by providing a simple conclusion: That is to say, *write-off (in English)* means cancelling. Safa initiates his turn with a mitigating dispreferred response (hedging): ah:: in line 94 but he is interrupted by the teacher, who provides two candidate responses. Fareed displays uptake on the two candidates through repetition and Ola immediately follows with her repetition of the two candidate responses (lines 95-96).

In line 98, Safa returns to the previous target lexeme (fragment above) of 'bad debt' but there is no uptake from his participants on this topic bid. Instead, Fareed and Ola engage in several more post-turn expansions and reformulation on the size or sum required for a 'write off'. Fareed closes the sequence with: OK, good (.) I swear by Allah that we benefit a lot from you, uttered in Arabic (line 103).

Brief Summary and Discussion (Fragment 3):

Different from fragment 1, code-switching to Arabic was principally related to word search, with less negotiation of meaning and more direct focus on finding definitions in Arabic. There are instances of code-switching for several different purposes. There are moments of code-switching as affiliative tags (*Y'anni*) and to hold the turn as well as mitigation of dispreferred

response to peers. Still, there is less affiliative talk through code-switching as was displayed in fragment 1 although the learners do display collaborative learning as Hussein and Safa aim to support Fareed's understanding of the target term proposed by the teacher. There are also instances of question-answer adjacency pairs in Arabic for task management. Finally, code-switching is used for reflexive negotiation and distribution of knowledge.

Limitations

The researchers are aware of the inherent limitations of this study. Firstly, it focuses on specific interactions within one particular context, with only four participants and while the depth and detail of the study can provide rich insights, it also means that findings are not necessarily generalizable to other settings or populations. Also, CA has been primarily developed within Western, English-speaking contexts, which may introduce linguistic and cultural biases. The researchers have aimed to be sensitive to the languages and cultures in this particular setting and hope that this study will help set a stepping stone for other similar CA work in ESP settings for Arabic speakers. Despite these limitations, the researchers feel that CA is a valuable method for studying interaction in learning contexts and can provide rich insights into the social dimensions of multiple language use, including the deployment of code-switching.

Conclusion

The detailed analysis of the talk-in-interaction of the online ESP lessons shows that CS serves various functions, including seeking assistance, negotiating meaning, bridging linguistic gaps, and facilitating comprehension among peers. It is used strategically to address specific communicative needs, such as word search or clarification. In this study, CS also includes affiliative talk, is used for holding the turn, mitigating dispreferred responses, task management, and even serves for reflexive negotiation and distribution of knowledge.

Learners in both fragments have taken part in dynamic interactive CS sequences for many purposes. For instance, the use of CS in *isaal amana* supported solidarity and collaborative learning experience. We can see how the use of CS contributes to affiliation and collaboration among the participants through their shared laughter and collaborative sense-making activities. Despite failing to have an ultimate consensus on a final term, the learners were keen to reach an acceptable word using their linguistic resources without requesting the help of their teacher, indicating a positive affective stance and collaborative learning experience. While in the discussion *write off*, CS was used to bridge linguistic gaps among learners and word search in which Safa took the lead to provide his colleagues with this information. The three of them used CS to argue for the Arabic equivalent for *write off*.

CS also influences teacher-student interaction. While students use code-switching to seek clarification and support from peers, the teacher's response in English did not always align with their communicative needs, leading to further confusion. However, code-switching can also serve as a resource for orienting the teacher towards areas of difficulty, enabling targeted support and

clarification. For instance, unlike the first fragment, in the second fragment, the learners and the teacher negotiated and came to agree upon *write off*, through the use of their L1 knowledge. This time the teacher participated in the CS process, clarifying information, requesting repairs, and approving suggestions.

CS is one of the tools available to L2 learners to enrich their learning experience negotiating, collaborating, and scaffolding each other's information. Learners in this research project showed affiliative learning experiences where they comfortably alternated between languages to understand accurately the terms, especially in a specialized subject like legal English. Researching ESP is a very rich milieu to investigate through the angle of conversational code-switching. Further investigation on ESP can be done on language of repair, frequency of CS instances on learners' and/or teacher's part, and the relation between CS and language acquisition. It is hoped that this study provides a small step towards further research in CS in ESP as we have aimed to demonstrate that CS can serve as a vital resource for learners in comprehending complex concepts by drawing on their linguistic repertoires to facilitate theirs and others' learning.

About the authors

Melinda Dooly is a Serra Húnter Full Professor at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Her principal research addresses technology-enhanced project-based language learning, intercultural communication and 21st century competences in teacher education. She has published widely in international journals and authored chapters and books in this area of study. She is lead researcher of GREIP: Research Centre for Education, Interaction & Plurilingualism.
Orcid Researcher ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1478-4892

Ola Bakri holds a Master's degree in Education from Saskatchewan University. She also has been awarded a Delta certificate from Cambridge University. She has worked as a freelancer at many places, such as an English instructor at the AUC (American University in Cairo) and the British University in Egypt (BUE). Ola has been teaching general English, academic English and ESP for more than 14 years. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7482-9535

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Appendices

Appendix A: Transcription Key

The transcription practices of this study are adapted from the Jeffersonian (2004) system of transcription notation.

Table 1. *Transcription Key*

Symbols	Descriptions
[ ]	Overlapping talk
=text	Latched talk
(.7)	Pause (per 0.10 seconds)
(.)	Micropause lasting under 0.1 seconds.
↑	Rising intonation of voice
↓	Dropping intonation of voice
XXX	Indistinguishable utterance
°text°	Utterance quieter than surrounding utterances
Text	Arabic word used (transliterated)
Text	Translation into English
((text))	Researcher comments about transcription
TEXT	Utterance is louder than surrounding utterances
(text)	Uncertain transcription; closest approximation
>text<	Speeding up of utterance
<text>	Slower pace of utterance

text-	abrupt stop in utterance