

HOW TO REMOVE ANXIETY OF MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS?

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Abstract: *The purpose of the paper is to reveal a key issue of multilingual classroom i.e. anxiety. When the teacher is mono- or bi-lingual and learners are multilingual then anxiety level of students is very high which creates threatened, de-motivated, and hold-back attitude among students for learning. As a result, such multilingual classroom is nothing more than a prison for learners which blatantly impairs learning and hampers open communication between teacher and student, who belong to diverse lingual background. Therefore, the paper suggests a strategy acronym as OBWMC (Off and on throwing Basic Words in Multilingual Classrooms). The strategy invites instructor to learn some basic 20-25 words of the learners' mother tongue. In a multilingual classroom mere knowing 20-25 words of students' mother tongue can infuse interest among learners towards language learning, lowers the affective filter and bolsters learner's self-esteem. Moreover, it also increases respect for other languages and dispel monotony of monolingual classrooms.*

Key words: *multilingual classrooms, anxiety, basic words*

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INTRODUCTION

Classroom is a place where multiple communities meet. English-language classrooms are intrinsically bi- or multi-lingual as both learners and teachers bring their native languages and sociolinguistic practices into the classroom. The growing popularity of learning English as a second or foreign language generates a substantial degree of socio-cultural pressure for adults to learn or improve their language skills. Therefore, mostly English language learning classes are stressful. The moment learners enter the class stress follows them. Along with anxiety multilingualism makes the situation more challenging. Students from diverse language background feels threatened in such classrooms which hinders learning process and hampers open communication between teacher and student. However, anxiety is the key issue of multilingual classrooms.

The purpose of the paper is to reveal a key issue of multilingual classrooms i.e. anxiety and provide a suggestion for its control. Anxiety is a common characteristic of multilingual classrooms. In such settings learners feel highly demotivated, threatened and hold-back from active learning. Hence, classroom is reduced to a sheer prison blatantly impairing interest of learners towards language learning and learning becomes nothing more than a passive, uninteresting and monotonous process.

A multilingual classroom employs various strategies to lower the anxiety level of the class. In this paper I will focus on the use of code-switching as a means to lower the affective filter of the multilingual classrooms in the Pakistani context. The use of basic words of the students' mother tongue lowers their anxiety level and allows part of the brain responsible for language acquisition to absorb the comprehensible input.

WHAT IS CODE-SWITCHING?

According to Encyclopedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics “the alternate use of two languages in the same discourse is called code-switching” (Johnson:49-50). Crystal (1987:96) suggests that code-switching is an irregular use of a second language. Speakers change from one language to another in the midst of their conversations to facilitate communication. Usually code switching occurs in informal situations and therefore, Zentella (1997: 27) calls it “an informal mixture of two languages”. Thus, code-switching occurs in informal conversation between individuals sharing the same linguistic code and classroom is one such place. For that reason classroom code-switching refers to the alternating use of more than one linguistic code in the classroom (Lin: 273).

In the 1940s and the 1950s many scholars called code-switching a sub-standard language usage (Weinreich: 34). Since the 1980s, however, most scholars have recognized it as a normal, natural product of bilingual and multilingual language users (Goldstein: 264-67). The 1990s saw a growing body of classroom-based research on the use of code-switching. Cook (2001:107) discusses the relationship between code-switching and language teaching. She states that for many students the ability to go from one language to another is highly desirable; there is not much point in being multi-competent if you are restricted by the demands of a single language. As Cook (2001: 106) clearly states that teachers should remember that the classroom is often a natural code-switching situation and there is nothing wrong or peculiar about code-switching.

Code switching in the classroom can be conscious or unconscious process. Both type of switching focuses on the bilingual teachers' use of language during classroom lessons. Teachers may decide on the spot when L1 should be used and when a switching to L2 is appropriate in order to enable comprehension and meaningful involvement of students (Cook 2001:108). More often, however,

teachers are unaware of the fact that they are switching; i.e., switches are made unconsciously.

In the English language classrooms many teachers see code-switching as a problem because the Immersion Model is not strictly followed. However, Cook (2002:108) says that the application of code switching in classes which do not share the same native language may create problems, as some of the students (though few in number) will somehow be neglected.

Types of Code-switching

Code switching may take a number of different forms, including alteration of sentences, phrases from both languages succeeding each other and switching in a long narrative (Crystal 1987:95). Cook (1991:110) states that in normal conversations amongst bilingual code switching consists of 84% single word switches, 10% phrase switches and 6% clause switching. Therefore there are various types of code-switching:

1. **Intra-sentential switching** occurs *within* a sentence or a clause. It is also called inter-clausal switching (Myers-Scotton 1989: 98).
2. **Intersentential switching** occurs *outside* the sentence or the clause level (i.e. at sentence or clause boundaries) (Li 2000:89). It is sometimes called "extrasentential" switching.
3. **Tag-switching** is the switching of either a tag phrase or a word, or both, from language-B to language-A (Li 2000: 89).
4. **Intra-word switching** occurs *within* a word, itself, such as at a morpheme boundary (Kroskrity 2000: 116).

However, the present study focuses on the first type of code switching i.e., intra-sentential switching. Let's imagine a scenario and put the whole situation in context.

SCENARIO

Imagine an English Language classroom of 20 students where 5 different language speaking students attend a lecture. 14 students speak Urdu while 1 speaks Spanish, 3 Turkish, 1 French, 1 Malay. Teacher's native language is Urdu while her second language is English. So the teacher is either mono- or bi-lingual while the learners are from diverse multi-lingual backgrounds like Spanish, Turkish, French, Malay and Urdu. What a chaos is there? How teacher can handle such lingual diversity?

There is nothing like if the teacher has full or partial command on all the 5 mother languages of those students, which seem impossible. In such classes anxiety level is very high and barrier exists between the teacher and multilingual students. A multilingual classroom employs various strategies to lower the pressures of the class. Among others one such strategy is to throw multilingual basic words off and on in the pre-, while- and post-lecture time. The strategy is acronym as OBWMC (Off and on throwing Basic Words in Multilingual Classrooms). What happens is that the use of basic words of the students' mother tongue lowers tension of the four walls of the classroom and allows part of the brain responsible for language acquisition to absorb the comprehensible input.

OBWMC technique simply asks for some basic adjectives, interjections and social interaction words in all the 5 languages. For such language learning, teacher needs not to go to any language teaching institute and learn the ABC of students' mother tongue. Moreover, it is not necessary too that instructor holds full command over all the languages with which students enter the classroom, which

seem impossible. However, mere manipulating OBWMC technique at upper-intermediate level can serve a lot in multilingual settings. It is really a fun learning some basic words of a new language and then using it to create homely learning environment.

As a teacher, I have taught French, Spanish, Malay, Turkish, and Urdu speaking students. It seems frustrating to me when non-native students feel anxious, lost and hinged in my class. It is very important that non-native students are given welcoming environment. Language is one such tool which can trigger miracles. Therefore, I figured out a way of working with such kind of multilingual situations. I have devised a technique called OBWMC (*Off and on throwing Basic Words in Multilingual Classrooms*) which encompasses a list of basic interjections, adjectives and social interaction words which can help building repertoire between teacher and non-native language learning student. Below is the list of basic adjectives, interjections, and social interaction words:

Sr. No	Basic Words	Sr. No	Basic Words
1.	Hi!	12.	Bad
2.	Hello!	13.	Excellent!
3.	Good Morning!	14.	Yes!
4.	Good Afternoon!	15.	No!
5.	Good Evening!	16.	Ok!
6.	How are You?	17.	Poor!
7.	Thank You!	18.	Average!
8.	Thanks!	19.	Keep it up!
9.	Difficult	20.	Have a good day!
10.	Easy	21.	See you tomorrow!
11.	Good	22.	Bye!

Since I have encountered five different language speaking students, therefore, I get the help of those particular non-native students to obtain the translation of the basic words, which I use with them. Moreover, there is a second option of the translation software which can help doing almost the same job. Below are the translations of the basic words into French, Spanish, Malay, Turkish, and Urdu:

Sr No	Language s→ Words ↓ English	French	Spanish	Malay	Turkish	Urdu
1.	Hi!	Bonjour /Salut	Hola	Hai	Merhaba/s elam	Assala m-o alaikum
2.	Hello!	Bonjour /Salut	Hola	Halo	Merhaba/s elam	Assala m-o alaikum
3.	Good Morning!	Bonjour	Buenos días	Selamat pagi	Günaydin	Subha bkhair
4.	Good Afternooh	Bonjour	Buenas tardes	Selamat siang	Iya akşamlar	Dpehar bkhair
5.	Good Evening!	Bonsoir	Buenas noches	Selamat malam	Iya geceler	Shaam bkhair
6.	How are You?	Comment allez vous?	Cómo estás?	Apa kabar?	Nasilin?	Kya haal hai?
7.	Thank You!	merci	Gracias	Terima kasih!	Teşekkür ederim	shukrya
8.	Thanks!	Grace	Gracias	Terima kasih!	Teşekkürler	Shukrya
9.	Difficult	Difficile	Difícil	Sukar	Zor	Mushkil
10.	Easy	Facile	Fácil	Mudah	Kolay	Aasaan

11.	Good	Bonne	Buena	Baik	Iyi	Acha
12.	Bad	Mauvaise	Malo	Buruk	Kötü	Bura
13.	Excellent!	Excellent	Excelente	Unggul	Mükemmel	Shandar
14.	Yes!	Oui	Sí	Ya	Evet	Han
15.	No!	Pas	No	Tidak ada	İçinde	Nahi
16.	Ok!	Bien	Ok	Ok	Ok	Theek hai
17.	Poor					Bura
18.	Average	Moyen	Promedio	Rata-rata	Ortalama	Behtar hai
19.	Keep it up!	la maintenir	Sigue así	Keep it up	Devam et	Shaabash
20.	Have a good day!	Ont une bonne journee	Tener un buen dia	Memiliki hari yang	Iyi günler	Khuda hafiz

Procedure

The procedure for using these words is simple. There are two ways of using OBWMC technique:

1. **One-to-one Interaction:** It is student-teacher interaction. Give students feedback either oral or written in their respective mother tongue. For example, if a student's written or spoken performance is good then teacher can give feedback in that student's mother tongue. Let's say, I have a Turkish student and s/he has shared a valuable point in the class discussion then I would say: "Iya or Mükemmel".

2. **Whole-class Interaction:** It is teacher-student interaction. The other way of using this technique can be through the social interaction words like good morning, afternoon, and evening. Teacher can greet the whole class in other than English language which can be an unusual way of starting the class. Greet multi-lingual students, as a whole class, in multiple languages. Being able to say something as simple as '*Hola, buenos días!*' (Hello, good morning! in Spanish language) will help the teacher to build trust not only with the Spanish speaking student but also with the whole class.

Following are some more example sentences wherein a teacher can use this technique creatively:

Example of Sentences

1. *Hola* class! (Hi class!)
2. *Gunyadan* class! (Good morning class!)
3. *Iya akşamlar* class! (Good afternoon class!)
4. *Buenas noches* class! (Good evening class!)
5. *Cómo estás?* (How are you?)
6. *Teşekkür ederim* Ali for a bright idea. (Thank You...)
7. *Gracias* for a good speech. (Thanks!)
8. Ali today your performance was very *buri*. (poor)
9. Ali your speech was *rata-rata*. (average)
10. Ali it is not a *sukar* concept. It is very easy. (difficult)
11. You know what it is so *kolay* to speak on any topic. You just have hesitation. (easy)
12. Good attempt in exam, Ali! (good)

13. Ali your paper was *kötü*. (bad)
14. Ali your assignment is *excelente*. Yes, it is really excellent.
15. Ali: Prepositions are easy? Is it so?
Teacher: *Sí!* But there are tricky ones too. (Yes!)
16. Ali: Tenses are difficult?
Teacher: *Tidak ada!* One should just know basic rules. (No!)
17. Your knowledge about poverty is *bien*. (ok)
18. Ali your class participation is *acha hai*. (average)
19. Ali you are improving! *la maintenir!* (Keep it up!)
20. Ok class! *Kal miltay hai*. (See you tomorrow!)
21. Ok class! *Gulay gulay!* (bye!)
22. *Khuda hafiz!* (Have a good day!)

THE FUNCTIONS OF OBWMC TECHNIQUE

There are multiple uses and functions of OBWMC technique in a foreign language classroom. Code switching is used not for interference but for communication of information and social interaction. Teacher builds solidarity and intimate relations with the students. Since L2 classrooms contain learners from multilingual backgrounds who feel anxious, tensed and threatened, therefore, knowing few codes of students' mother language can lower the affective filter, bring students closer to the instructor, and increases the amount of learning. Moreover, it improves communication between different linguistic and cultural groups.

Use of these words not only open healthy communication but also increases verbal input to other students. It brings students of

different cultures and languages together. Besides this, OBWMC technique motivates other students towards asking translation of random words in the language other than their own mother tongue. I remember a student asking French translation of “I love you” from a French speaking student on Valentines Day, since he wanted to make it special and unusual for his Urdu- and English-speaking beloved. The French student giggled and responded him that it is “je t'aime”. Apart from a threat-free environment students Urdu speaking students feel friendly towards French-speaking student and developed empathy for him. Furthermore, OBWMC increases students' attention span, lessen the cognitive load of English classrooms, foster intellectual flexibility, promote tolerance, cultivate collaborative learning, and develop understanding among diverse cultures and languages.

This type of switching may also be used to exclude others from a conversation who does not speak the second language but it arouses curiosity among students to learn student's mother tongue. Students can pick certain words and remember them unconsciously or can ask the translation of any particular word in their native language. It also reduces the lingual and cultural differences in a multilingual classrooms and students desire to know more about the language and ask a frequent question what do you say this or that word in your mother tongue.

Apart from lowering the affective filter, OBWMC technique also promote interfaith harmony, trust, and sharing among students. It helps teacher to get closer to the students and win their trust. It opens window for better learning. Student can come and ask questions fearlessly. There is open communication like a free flowing air from the neighbor. It is an effective teaching strategy to fight linguistic, cognitive and emotional barrier within the four walls of the class.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, OBWMC technique is both inevitable and necessary in the university classroom. It only asks for some basic interjections, adjectives and social interaction words at the helm of teacher. Knowing these words and using those off and on in multilingual settings lowers the affective filter, dispels monotony of monolingual classrooms and build trust. It also maximizes communication between the teacher and student from diverse language backgrounds. Moreover, use of OBWMC technique expresses solidarity, build rapport, and ensure trust of the students in multilingual classrooms.

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The word "Celt" is written in a large, stylized, blue font with a white outline and a slight drop shadow. The letters are bold and rounded, with a modern, sans-serif feel. The 'C' is particularly large and prominent.