

CODE-SWITCHING AND L2 STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY: BILINGUALISM AS AN ENRICHING RESOURCE¹

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Abstract

This paper discusses pedagogical and conversational functions of Estonian-Russian code-switching (henceforth CS) in the university classroom setting. Based on the data from university classroom bilingual interactions, this study will contribute to the current discussion of CS in the classroom and fill an important gap in existing research, as well as to the understanding of its conversational roles.

The students and the teacher in this study are speakers of Russian as L1 and of Estonian as L2. However, the former have a more limited knowledge of the Estonian language. Thus, the interactions are characterized by varying levels of Estonian mastery by the participants. A switch to L1, whether initiated by the teacher or the student, aims to increase the efficacy of information conveyance. Short switches help to bridge a gap in the discourse. The results show that during lectures or seminars students use Russian as the language with which they feel most comfortable and in which they enjoy greater competence.

Key words: classroom discourse, code-switching, Estonian, Russian, SLA.

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