

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CODE-SWITCHING USED BY TEACHERS IN NON-ENGLISH MAJOR CLASSROOMS

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Abstract: The use of code-switching in English classrooms has long been debated among educators and researchers. In Vietnam, many non-English major students struggle with complex linguistic input and abstract grammar rules. To address these difficulties, EFL teachers often employ code-switching to enhance comprehension, clarify instructions, and manage classrooms. Despite its widespread use, limited research has examined non-English major students' perceptions of code-switching, especially in tertiary EFL contexts. This study investigates how students perceive their teachers' code-switching and its specific functions. Data were collected from 105 non-English major students at a university in Central Vietnam through a questionnaire adapted from Nursanti (2016) and based on Ferguson's (2009) functional framework. Results reveal that students generally view code-switching positively. They believe it facilitates understanding, improves classroom management, and fosters stronger teacher-student relationships. These findings suggest that code-switching is an effective strategy to bridge language gaps and enhance communication in Vietnamese EFL classrooms.

Key words: Students' perceptions; code-switching; EFL classroom; non-English major students

NHẬN THỨC CỦA SINH VIÊN VỀ VIỆC SỬ DỤNG CHUYỂN NGỮ CỦA GIÁO VIÊN TRONG CÁC LỚP HỌC TIẾNG ANH KHÔNG CHUYÊN

Tóm tắt: Việc sử dụng chuyển ngữ trong các lớp học tiếng Anh tại Việt Nam từ lâu là đề tài tranh luận giữa các học giả. Nhiều sinh viên không chuyên gặp khó khăn trong việc tiếp nhận ngôn ngữ phức tạp và quy tắc ngữ pháp trừu tượng. Để hỗ trợ, giáo viên thường sử dụng chuyển ngữ nhằm giúp sinh viên hiểu bài, làm rõ hướng dẫn và quản lý lớp học. Tuy nhiên, nghiên cứu nhận thức của sinh viên về việc sử dụng chuyển ngữ của giáo viên trong bối cảnh đại học còn hạn chế. Nghiên cứu này khảo sát 105 sinh viên không chuyên tại một trường đại học ở khu vực miền Trung, sử dụng bảng hỏi dựa trên nghiên cứu của Nursanti (2016) và khung chức năng của Ferguson (2009). Kết quả cho thấy sinh viên đánh giá tích cực việc sử dụng chuyển ngữ của giáo viên, giúp sinh viên hiểu bài tốt hơn, quản lý lớp hiệu quả và củng cố quan hệ giữa giáo viên và sinh viên. Chuyển ngữ được xem là chiến lược hiệu quả thu hẹp khoảng cách ngôn ngữ và cải thiện giao tiếp trong các lớp tiếng Anh không chuyên tại Việt Nam.

Từ khóa: Nhận thức của sinh viên; chuyển ngữ; tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ; sinh viên tiếng Anh không chuyên

1. Introduction

The practice of code-switching in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms has long been a topic of discussion in the field of language education. Code-switching, commonly defined as the alternating use of two or more languages within a conversation or discourse (Gumperz, 1982), occurs in multilingual environments where students and teachers share knowledge of the native language as well as the target language (Dinh, 2020). In EFL settings, particularly in non-English major classrooms, teachers frequently switch between English and students' native language to facilitate learning and foster communication (Puspawati, 2018). In Vietnam, where English is a foreign language, teachers often use code-switching as a pedagogical tool to bridge linguistic gaps and support students in their journey toward English proficiency (Grant & Nguyen, 2017; Le, 2022). However, the use of code-switching remains a contentious issue, with some educators advocating for a strict "English-only" approach, while others see value in its practical application, especially when learners struggle with difficult concepts (Fhitri, 2017; Rasouli & Simin, 2016).

Numerous studies (e.g., Adriosh & Razi, 2019; Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009; Alrabah et al., 2016; Keong et al., 2016; Noori & Rasoly, 2017; Nurhamidah, Fauziati & Supriyadi, 2018; Sondang & Bonik, 2018; Songxaba, et al., 2017) have examined the role of code-switching in EFL classrooms, with varying results depending on the educational context, student demographics, and teaching methodologies. For instance, Ahmad and Jusoff (2009) explored Malaysian university students' perceptions of teachers' code-switching in English classrooms, particularly among learners with low English proficiency. The study emphasized that code-switching serves various pedagogical functions, including explaining new terms, managing classroom procedures, and reducing learners' cognitive load. Meanwhile, Alrabah et al. (2016) conducted a mixed-methods study examining the use of learners' first language (L1), Arabic, by English teachers in Kuwaiti college-level EFL classrooms. The study focused on three primary aspects: the functions of L1 use, the affective, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic factors motivating its use, and the teachers' attitudes toward this pedagogical strategy. Despite recognizing the practical benefits of L1 use, many teachers expressed negative attitudes toward its role in language teaching. They feared overreliance on L1 could limit students' exposure to English, and some reported feelings of guilt and professional inadequacy when using Arabic in class. In contrast, Keong et al. (2016) and Nurhamidah, Fauziati and Supriyadi (2018) argued for its pedagogical value when applied judiciously. For non-English major students, in particular, code-switching may alleviate cognitive overload by reducing the mental effort required to process content in a language in which they are not yet proficient. Teachers can use the native language to clarify difficult concepts, explain abstract ideas, or manage classroom behavior, all of which contribute to a more effective learning environment (Cook, 2001; Turnbull & Dailey-OCain, 2009).

Nevertheless, the relevance of these findings to the Vietnamese context remains limited, as few studies have comprehensively examined code-switching from the learners' perspective (Dinh, 2020; Le, 2022; Vu, 2021). Most existing research has predominantly emphasized teachers' perspectives, often overlooking the important insights that could be gained from students' experiences. Given these research gaps and the context of Vietnam, characterized by large class sizes and varying student proficiency levels, this study seeks to address the void by

investigating Vietnamese non-English major student perspectives on the role and impact of code-switching on language learning. More specifically, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on code-switching in EFL settings and offers practical implications for teachers working in similar settings. Ultimately, the findings of this research could help inform pedagogical decisions regarding the use of code-switching and contribute to more effective EFL teaching practices in non-English major classrooms. To achieve this goal, the study seeks to address the following question:

RQ: What are students' perceptions of their teachers' use of code-switching in the classroom?

2. Literature review

2.1 Definitions of key terms

2.1.1 Code

A “code” can be broadly defined as a system of signs shared and used among people in a particular community or society to communicate with one another (Harya, 2018; Wardhaugh, 2006). This term may also refer to a language or a variety of languages, including dialects, pidgins, or creoles (Wardhaugh, 2006). Mabule (2015) further emphasizes that codes reflect the values, attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and practices of the communities or societies in which they are shared. Accordingly, the current study adopts Wardhaugh's (2006) definition of a code as a system of signs, such as English or Vietnamese, used by individuals to communicate.

2.1.2 Code-switching

Code-switching refers to the phenomenon in which bilingual or multilingual speakers alternate between two or more languages within a single communicative event (Blom & Gumperz, 1972). This practice is often employed to enhance mutual understanding, clarify meaning, or fulfill specific communicative purposes, particularly in contexts where interlocutors share linguistic repertoires. As such, code-switching has been approached and defined in multiple ways, reflecting varied theoretical perspectives. For instance, Blom and Gumperz (1972) describe it as the strategic exchange of languages serving social interactional goals. Likewise, Myers-Scotton (1993) defines it as the selection of linguistic forms from more than one language variety within a single conversation, emphasizing the agency of bilingual speakers. Garner-Chloros (2009) and Milroy and Muysken (1995) also support the view that code-switching can occur both between and within utterances, thereby highlighting its syntactic and pragmatic fluidity.

In language classrooms, especially within EFL contexts, code-switching assumes a pedagogical function and is thus examined in more specific terms. Abdollahi, Ramin, and Maleki (2015) define code-switching in classrooms as “a learning tool that occurs at different levels,” involving not only lexical but also grammatical switching, including shifts in the use of verbs, adverbs, and technical terminology (p. 847). Jingxia (2010) adds that in foreign language teaching, it refers to the purposeful alternation between the L1 and the target language, often employed by teachers to facilitate comprehension when necessary.

It is important to distinguish code-switching from closely related phenomena, such as code-mixing and borrowing. Muysken (2000) argues that the distinction between code-switching and code-mixing primarily lies in the syntactic location of the switch. Code-switching typically

occurs at the clause or sentence level (inter-sentential), whereas code-mixing takes place within a clause or sentence (intra-sentential), involving the insertion of single lexical items or short phrases. Bhatia and Ritchie (2004) further clarify that code-switching often spans across sentence boundaries, while code-mixing is more localized. Another related concept is borrowing, which involves the incorporation of words or set expressions from one language into the lexicon of another. Gumperz (1982) defines borrowing as “the introduction of single words or short, frozen, idiomatic phrases from one variety into the other” (p. 62), distinguishing it from code-switching by its long-term lexical integration.

In this study, the focus is specifically on code-switching, as it is practiced in Vietnamese EFL classrooms. It is crucial to note that although code-switching may occur in either direction (from English to the first language or vice versa), the present research limits its scope to instances where teachers switch from English to Vietnamese. This choice is justified by the fact that both teachers and students share Vietnamese as their L1, which increases the likelihood and relevance of such switches. Moreover, it allows for more precise documentation and analysis of how these language shifts function pedagogically and contextually. Following Muysken’s (2000) classification, both inter-sentential and intra-sentential instances of code-switching are examined in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of its use. For clarity, the term “code-switching” in this study refers to any switch from English to Vietnamese, regardless of whether it occurs within or between sentences.

2.2 Functions of teachers' code-switching in foreign language classrooms

Exploring the functions of code-switching in language teaching is crucial for understanding how and why code-switching can best serve language classrooms. Previous studies have investigated different functions of code-switching, but one of the most popular frameworks is that of Ferguson (2009), which has been applied in studies across different contexts (e.g., Ataş & Sağın-Şimşek, 2021; Cahyani et al., 2018; Hafid & Margana, 2022). Ferguson categorizes code-switching into three main functions: (1) code-switching for knowledge construction, (2) code-switching for classroom management, and (3) code-switching for interpersonal relationships. This framework highlights both the structural and functional dimensions of bilingual communication and reflects the communicative needs of teachers working with students with varying language proficiencies. Accordingly, the present study adopts Ferguson’s (2009) framework as the theoretical basis for investigating the dominant functions of code-switching in General English (GE) classes.

2.2.1 Code-switching for knowledge construction

Ferguson (2009) highlights code-switching for knowledge construction as a key pedagogical tool that facilitates students’ comprehension of lesson content. In this role, it serves as a linguistic bridge, particularly when students engage with complex texts. It assists the teacher's commentary on the meaning of the text, effectively conveying content to students who have limited control over the language of the text. This function aims to empower students by making core curriculum content more accessible, thus promoting deeper understanding and engagement. This function includes a range of strategies aimed at enhancing students’ comprehension of academic content. Firstly, code-switching serves as a tool for aiding content comprehension. When introducing complex ideas or difficult topics, teachers switch to the students’ first language

to provide additional clarity. This is particularly valuable when students encounter technical terms or abstract concepts that may be difficult to grasp solely in the target language. Secondly, code-switching is instrumental in reinforcing conceptual understanding. By using the students' first language, teachers emphasize and strengthen core lesson concepts to ensure full comprehension and mastery of the subject matter. Thirdly, code-switching functions as a means of explaining technical terms. In technical subjects or disciplines, certain terms may lack direct equivalents in the target language, making them difficult to understand. By quickly switching to the first language, teachers can provide clear and precise explanations. Finally, code-switching supports the review process of previously taught topics. When reviewing prior material, teachers can use the students' first language to summarize key points, reinforcing their understanding of the content.

2.2.2 Code-switching for classroom management

In addition to its instructional purposes, code-switching is also utilized to motivate, discipline, and praise learners. It functions as a flexible resource for negotiating task instructions and eliciting student contributions while maintaining discipline. Code-switching for classroom management is a dynamic tool for navigating various aspects of classroom dynamics, such as capturing students' attention or introducing a shift in focus (Ferguson, 2009). This flexibility ensures that students remain engaged and receptive to different teaching strategies. Code-switching is also valuable in addressing student behavior. Whether praising active participation, redirecting off-topic discussions, or gently reminding students of disruptive behavior, switching to the students' first language (L1) can enhance communication and ensure clear understanding in classroom interactions. It serves to manage students' behavior and maintain a conducive learning environment. Furthermore, code-switching can foster students' self-awareness. When discussing behavior or actions, teachers can switch to their first language to encourage students to reflect on their behavior and decisions within the classroom context.

2.2.3 Code-switching for interpersonal communication

According to Ferguson (2009), this function pertains to the emotional and social aspects of classroom interactions. Code-switching plays a crucial role in fostering positive relationships. Switching to the learners' L1 can facilitate relationship-building, personal interaction, and deeper engagement, thereby creating a warm and inclusive learning environment. When teachers switch to the students' first language, they send a message of inclusion. Offering praise, sharing personal anecdotes, or engaging in informal conversations in the L1 can help break down barriers between teachers and students. This not only makes the learning atmosphere more approachable but also encourages students to participate more actively. Code-switching contributes to creating moments of connection that transcend the formal boundaries of the classroom.

2.4 Previous studies related to the current research

As code-switching is a common phenomenon in EFL classrooms, numerous studies have delved into this topic, exploring not only the perceptions of teachers and students regarding code-switching but also how they perceive its role in language teaching.

A consistent finding in the literature is that learners generally view teachers' use of code-switching positively. One of the most frequently reported benefits is that code-switching enhances

comprehension and reduces anxiety, particularly when students struggle with complex vocabulary or abstract concepts. In a study conducted in Pakistan, Younas et al. (2014) found that both students and teachers regarded code-switching as a helpful instructional strategy. Most students expressed that they preferred lessons where teachers used code-switching, as it made learning English easier and less intimidating. Similarly, Nordin et al. (2013) reported that students believed they benefited from code-switching, finding it supportive in grasping difficult content and improving language acquisition.

Further evidence of code-switching supporting learner confidence and respect for teachers can be seen in Alenezi's (2010) study, where 64% of students indicated they respected teachers more when code-switching was used in lectures. They also associated code-switching with better academic outcomes, particularly in examinations. Nursanti (2016), investigating junior high school students with low English proficiency in an Indonesian EFL context, found that bilingual instruction significantly improved student engagement and learning outcomes, reinforcing the value of code-switching for learners at lower proficiency levels.

Several studies highlight the pedagogical benefits of code-switching, particularly in delivering knowledge and facilitating classroom communication. Nurhamidah, Fauziati and Supriyadi (2018) emphasized that both teachers and students considered code-switching useful for transmitting instructional content and maintaining effective communication. Teachers reported switching codes to clarify grammatical points, explain reading passages, and facilitate smoother interaction in the classroom.

Adriosh and Razi (2019) echoed these findings, identifying code-switching as a strategic tool that supports both the academic and social dimensions of classroom interaction. Teachers employed code-switching not only to convey information but also to create a more inclusive and responsive learning environment. Ahmad (2009) found a significant positive correlation between teachers' use of code-switching and students' affective support and academic performance, further underlining the pedagogical effectiveness of this practice.

In addition to cognitive and instructional benefits, code-switching has been shown to improve classroom atmosphere and student-teacher rapport. Tibategeza and Du Plessis (2018), examining multilingual classrooms in Tanzania, reported that students learned more effectively when taught in a language they understood well. Code-switching was seen as essential for ensuring subject accessibility, classroom management, and meaningful interpersonal interactions. Students felt more comfortable when teachers encouraged and guided them in their first language, which fostered a supportive, less intimidating environment conducive to learning. This affective dimension of code-switching is particularly important in EFL settings with diverse student populations, where emotional safety and teacher encouragement play vital roles in language learning success.

In Vietnam, where English is taught as a foreign language in large, mixed-proficiency classrooms, the role of code-switching remains underexplored. Although a few studies have touched upon code-switching in Vietnamese EFL contexts (e.g., Dinh, 2020; Le, 2022; Phan, 2021; Vu, 2021), their findings remain limited in scope. For example, Dinh (2020) observed that teachers often switched codes to clarify vocabulary and grammar, especially in lower-level classes. Le (2022) found that students appreciated code-switching when it was used strategically

to explain difficult concepts. Similarly, Vu (2021) emphasized its role in enhancing classroom rapport and student participation. While these studies provide valuable insights, they mainly examine code-switching from the instructors' perspectives and do not explore learners' experiences in depth (with the exception of Phan, 2021). While Phan's (2021) study focused on English majors, the present research centers on non-English major students, thereby potentially offering an inclusive and practical perspective that reflects the realities of general English classrooms in Vietnam.

While the existing literature strongly supports the instructional and affective benefits of code-switching in EFL classrooms, it is noteworthy that most studies have been conducted in contexts outside of Vietnam, such as Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Kuwait. Moreover, the majority of these studies focus on teachers' perspectives, often overlooking students' perspectives. Therefore, this study fills the gap by examining how non-English majors perceive code-switching in the Vietnamese higher education context. The present study seeks to provide meaningful insights into how code-switching can be more effectively employed to support diverse learner needs in similar settings.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research method

This study employed a quantitative research method to investigate students' perceptions of teachers' code-switching in non-major English classes. The quantitative approach was chosen to provide measurable and statistically significant data, allowing for a systematic analysis of patterns in the research participants' responses (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument.

3.2 Research subjects, scope, participants and data collection tool

This study investigates the students' perceptions of teachers' code-switching in non-major English classes at Level 3 according to the six-level Foreign Language Proficiency Framework for Vietnam (equivalent to B1 in the CEFR) and examines the current use of code-switching by non-major English instructors. The research is conducted at a tertiary institution in central Vietnam, where students from various faculties within its university take General English courses as part of their undergraduate programs. The English curriculum at this institution includes two levels. For General English courses, the *Life* series by National Geographic Learning publisher has been adopted as the primary teaching materials, supplemented by the Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET, 2010) as additional materials. General English is a compulsory component worth seven credits, or 105 guided instructional hours, although students typically require 350 to 400 hours to achieve CEFR B1 proficiency. These credits are distributed across the first three semesters of the undergraduate program in a 2-2-3 credit sequence. In this sequence, the first two credits correspond to Level 1 (CEFR A1), the next two to Level 2 (CEFR A2), and the final three to Level 3 (CEFR B1). Upon completing the General English program, students may choose to enroll in a 30- or 45-hour Specialized English (ESP) course, depending on their major.

A total of 105 participants from Level 3 classes took part in an online survey administered via Google Forms. They were undergraduate students majoring in various disciplines other than English, from different colleges and faculties at the research site. The participants came from

regions across the country and had all studied English in high school before entering university. Nevertheless, their English proficiency level varied considerably, although they were expected to reach level 3 after the course. These students had attended Level 1 and Level 2 English courses before they enrolled in this course. However, students were allowed to take Level 3 English courses even if they did not pass their previous levels, due to a local university designed to help students accumulate their language learning credits continuously (7 credits in total), which are spread across three semesters with an average of three periods per week. Accordingly, these students are expected to achieve Level 3 upon graduation.

The questionnaire in this study was adapted from Nursanti's (2016) instrument, which was originally designed to explore students' perceptions of their teachers' use of bilingual language in EFL classrooms. Nursanti's questionnaire included 8 items targeting the frequency, purpose, and perceived effectiveness of teachers' code-switching between English and the students' first language. This study also incorporated Ferguson's (2009) functional framework which identifies three core functions of code-switching in the classroom: knowledge construction, classroom management, and interpersonal relations. Based on this framework, additional items were added to the Nursanti's (2016) questionnaire to better capture the multifaceted roles of code-switching.

The final questionnaire consisted of 16 items, structured around the combined themes of Nursanti's work and Ferguson's framework. These items were grouped into sub-sections to explore various dimensions of teacher code-switching, including: (1) perceived impact of code-switching on teacher competence; (2) its role in knowledge construction and delivery; (3) its effectiveness for classroom management; (4) its significance in building interpersonal relationships and (5) its impact on English learning. All items were designed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." A bilingual version (English-Vietnamese) of the questionnaire was provided to ensure clarity and minimize misunderstanding.

Prior to the main data collection, the instrument was piloted with a small group of students to ensure clarity and reliability, and minor revisions were made based on their feedback. The survey was administered during scheduled class time with the consent of both instructors and students. Responses were anonymous to encourage honesty. Upon completion, the data were coded and analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) were used to examine students' attitudes and perceptions.

4. Findings and discussion

This section presents the findings and discussion of the study. The results offer valuable insights into students' perceptions of teachers' use of code-switching in non-major English classes. The subsequent subsections explore specific aspects of these perceptions, including the perceived impact of code-switching on teacher competence (Section 4.1), its role in knowledge construction and delivery (Section 4.2), its effectiveness for classroom management (Section 4.3), its significance in building interpersonal relationships (Section 4.4), and its impact on English learning (Section 4.5). Following the presentation of these findings, the discussion interprets the results in the context of existing literature, examining their implications for language teaching practices.

4.1 Students' perceptions of code-switching related to teacher competence

Table 4.1

Students' Perceptions of Code-Switching Related to Teacher Competence

No.	Item	Statement	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1	1	Teachers who code-switch from English to Vietnamese are proficient in English.	2	5	4.59	0.61
2	11	Teachers who code-switch pollute languages.	1	5	2.02	1.44

Table 4.1 presents students' perceptions regarding the relationship between teachers' code-switching practices and their linguistic competence. A strong agreement was recorded for the statement that teachers who code-switch are proficient in English ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0.61$), suggesting that students do not equate the use of Vietnamese with a lack of language ability. Rather, they perceive it as a deliberate pedagogical choice by competent educators. Conversely, responses to the statement that code-switching "pollutes languages" yielded a lower mean score ($M = 2.02$), indicating general disagreement. However, the relatively high standard deviation ($SD = 1.44$) suggests considerable variation in students' views. While most students rejected the idea that code-switching compromises language purity, a minority appeared concerned about potential linguistic interference. This highlights the need for careful and strategic use of code-switching to mitigate fears of language dilution and reinforce its role as a pedagogical support rather than a crutch. These findings are in line with those of Ahmad (2009) and Younas et al. (2014), who reported that students often interpret teachers' use of code-switching as a marker of pedagogical responsiveness rather than linguistic inadequacy.

4.2 Students' perceptions of teacher code-switching for knowledge construction and delivery

Table 4.2

Students' Perceptions of Teacher Code-Switching for Knowledge Construction and Delivery

No.	Item	Statement	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1	4	Code-switching allows me to understand lesson topics better.	3	5	4.58	0.64
2	5	Teacher code-switching from English to Vietnamese helps me learn new vocabulary better.	3	5	4.50	0.66
3	6	Code-switching helps me understand complex grammar points better.	3	5	4.42	0.67

As shown in Table 4.2, students overwhelmingly perceived teacher code-switching as instrumental in facilitating content comprehension. High mean scores were reported for its usefulness in understanding lesson topics ($M = 4.58$), learning new vocabulary ($M = 4.50$), and grasping complex grammar points ($M = 4.42$). These responses reinforce the notion that code-switching can serve as a scaffold to bridge the gap between known and new information, particularly when dealing with abstract or linguistically dense content. The findings resonate with those of Adriosh and Razi (2019), who similarly found that learners perceive L1 use as a facilitator for cognitive processing in EFL contexts.

4.3 Students' perceptions of teacher code-switching for classroom management

Table 4.3

Students' Perceptions of Teacher Code-Switching for Classroom Management

No.	Item	Statement	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1	2	Teachers who code-switch from English to Vietnamese can discipline students better.	3	5	4.65	0.55
2	3	Teachers who code-switch from English to Vietnamese can capture students' attention better.	2	5	4.62	0.59

Table 4.3 reveals strong student support for code-switching as an effective classroom management tool. Specifically, students agreed that teachers who code-switch are better at disciplining students ($M = 4.65$) and capturing attention ($M = 4.62$). This suggests that the strategic use of the L1 enables teachers to assert authority and maintain student engagement, particularly in moments requiring clarity, immediacy, or emotional resonance. These findings are consistent with the research of Nabifar (2017) and Tibategeza and Du Plessis (2018), who reported that code-switching helped maintain classroom order and enhance student responsiveness, especially among learners with limited proficiency.

4.4 Students' perceptions of teacher code-switching for building interpersonal relationships

Table 4.4

Students' Perceptions of Teacher Code-Switching for Building Interpersonal Relationships

No.	Item	Statement	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1	7	Teachers who code-switch from English to Vietnamese can provide better feedback on students' responses.	3	5	4.58	0.64
2	8	Teachers who code-switch from English to Vietnamese can give better praise to their students.	3	5	4.50	0.66
3	9	Teachers who code-switch can make the classroom atmosphere more lively (e.g., humorous).	3	5	4.42	0.67
4	10	Code-switching makes me feel more comfortable and confident in class.	2	5	4.14	0.90

Table 4.4 illustrates that students believe code-switching enhances the interpersonal dimension of teaching. Students agreed that teachers who switch to Vietnamese are better able to give feedback ($M = 4.58$), offer praise ($M = 4.50$), and foster a livelier and more engaging classroom atmosphere ($M = 4.42$). Moreover, code-switching contributed to students' emotional comfort and confidence ($M = 4.14$). These results corroborate Nurhamidah, Fauziati and Supriyadi (2018), who emphasize the social-relational functions of code-switching. When teachers use learners' L1 strategically, it fosters rapport and reduces the psychological distance between teacher and students.

4.5 Students' perceptions of the impact of teacher code-switching on English learning

Table 4.5

Students' Perceptions of the Impact of Teacher Code-Switching on English Learning

No.	Item	Statement	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1	12	Teacher use of Vietnamese in English class confuses me when learning English.	1	5	2.20	1.29
2	13	Teacher code-switching weakens my English skills.	1	5	2.02	1.35
3	14	Teacher code-switching makes my listening skills worse.	1	5	2.10	1.30
4	15	I can't focus on the lecture when the teacher code-switches from English to Vietnamese.	1	5	1.93	1.35
5	16	I feel that teachers violate English language rules when code-switching.	1	5	1.76	1.31

Table 4.5 highlights students' perceptions towards potential drawbacks of code-switching in language learning. The low mean scores across all five negatively framed statements suggest that most students do not perceive teacher code-switching as detrimental to their language development. Specifically, students disagreed that it caused confusion ($M = 2.20$), weakened their skills ($M = 2.02$), worsened listening abilities ($M = 2.10$), reduced focus ($M = 1.93$), or violated language norms ($M = 1.76$). While these responses affirm students' belief in the utility of code-switching, the moderately high standard deviations (ranging from 1.29 to 1.35) suggest that a minority remains concerned about its overuse. This nuanced view implies that although students value code-switching, they also recognize the importance of gradually transitioning to more English-dominant instruction as their proficiency improves.

Overall, the findings from this study affirm that Vietnamese EFL learners generally hold positive attitudes toward teachers' use of code-switching across multiple dimensions: teacher competence, knowledge delivery, classroom management, interpersonal relationships, and language development. Students perceive teachers' use of code-switching as a valuable instructional tool, especially for clarifying difficult content and alleviating language learning anxiety. These views align with earlier studies (Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009; Nabifar, 2017; Nursanti, 2016) and reinforce the idea that code-switching can be an intentional, pedagogically driven strategy rather than a fallback due to linguistic limitations. This demonstrates that the use of the L1 for certain classroom activities is still commonly employed by teachers to help students access lessons more easily and to establish a close relationship between teachers and students - especially for non-major English students, a group with relatively limited English proficiency and motivation to learn English.

Furthermore, students consider code-switching as a useful tool for creating a safer communication environment for students. This aligns with the findings of Nurhamidah, Fauziati, and Supriyadi (2018), who noted that both teachers and students code-switched primarily to improve communication. Similarly, Grant and Nguyen's (2013) ethnographic study reported that Vietnamese EFL teachers code-switched strategically to enhance comprehension although learner perspectives were not central to their research.

Additionally, the study found that learners hold mixed reactions to teachers' code-switching. While they do not unanimously agree on all its benefits, many prefer that teachers use it in class. Students acknowledge that code-switching helps them better understand lessons by involving a language familiar to them (Tibategeza & Du Plessis, 2018). This is particularly important for non-English major students, who often show lower motivation and proficiency than their English-major counterparts. This finding is supported by Luong (2022), who found a relationship between students' anxiety levels and their preferences for code-switching, highlighting the emotional benefits such as reduced anxiety, increased motivation, and enhanced comprehension. These insights are consistent with those of Nursanti (2016), who also emphasized the role of code-switching in enhancing learning effectiveness. Students reported feeling more confident and motivated when teachers used code-switching, as it helped them stay focused and feel connected. This aligns with Le's (2022) findings, which showed that code-switching in both spoken and written interactions strengthened communication between students and lecturers.

Unlike Phan's (2021) study, which focused on English majors and found more neutral or cautious attitudes toward L1 use, this study centers on non-English majors, who reported consistently positive attitudes toward teacher code-switching. Phan's (2021) participants, with higher English proficiency preferred an English-only environments for academic rigor and global communication. In contrast, this study's participants - many with lower English proficiency and and intrinsic motivation valued code-switching for improving comprehension, feedback, and emotional security in the classroom.

These findings align with those of Dinh (2020), who observed that Vietnamese teachers frequently code-switched to clarify vocabulary and grammar in lower-level classes. Similarly, Le (2022) reported that students appreciated the strategic use of Vietnamese to explain difficult concepts, while Vu (2021) emphasized the positive role of code-switching in enhancing classroom engagement and rapport.

The present research, by foregrounding student voices, contributes to this body of research and affirms that for non-English majors in Vietnam, code-switching is not only acceptable but often preferred, especially when used strategically to bridge comprehension gaps and reduce anxiety. Unlike English majors, who may strive for immersion, non-English majors benefit more directly from strategic code-switching. This underscores the need for teaching strategies tailored to learners' specific contexts and needs.

Nevertheless, a minority of students expressed concerns about potential overuse of the L1, fearing it may hinder full English exposure, especially in listening and communicative tasks. These concerns highlight the importance of balance and purposeful deployment, particularly as students' proficiency grows. Teachers are therefore encouraged to employ code-switching selectively and intentionally, using it as a bridge rather than a crutch.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the majority of students support teachers' use of code-switching in their Level 3 English classes. Teachers' code-switching helps students understand the lesson content more easily and learn vocabulary more effectively. Additionally, teachers' use of the L1 during teaching makes students feel more confident in the classroom. Furthermore, students believe that code-switching helps teachers manage the class better, fosters interpersonal relationships between teachers and learners, and allows teachers to give praise and provide feedback more clearly. Moreover, students reported that code-switching does not cause confusion or undermine the teachers' English proficiency. On the contrary, it increases students' comfort and engagement, as they find lessons easier to follow when teachers code-switch.

The study contributes to the existing body of literature by offering context-specific insights from Vietnam, a context often underrepresented in code-switching research. It also supports the notion that for non-English major students, who may have limited motivation and lower proficiency, code-switching can provide essential linguistic support and emotional reassurance. Teachers working with non-majors should not feel constrained by monolingual teaching ideologies, but instead be encouraged to use code-switching purposefully to meet learners' cognitive and affective needs. Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of training teachers to recognize when and how to code-switch effectively to maximize both learning and emotional outcomes in EFL settings.

Despite these valuable insights, the study has certain limitations. The findings are drawn from quantitative data collected from a specific group of Level 3 students at a single institution, which may not represent learners at other levels or in different contexts. Furthermore, the study did not examine teachers' perspectives or observe actual classroom practices, which are essential for a more comprehensive understanding of code-switching. Future research should involve a broader range of students with varying English proficiency levels and adopt qualitative approaches - such as classroom observations and interviews with both students and teachers - to gain deeper insights into the use and perception of code-switching in the classroom.

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