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CODE-SWITCHING AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY IN ESL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract:

This research paper examines the phenomenon of code-switching in ESL classrooms in Malaysia, where English teachers often employ the Malay language as a support tool for teaching and learning. The study aims to investigate the reasons behind code-switching among students and lecturers in the English language classroom at Malaysian Polytechnics and explore how it contributes to their language acquisition goals. A descriptive qualitative research design was employed, and data were collected through self-administered questionnaires from English language lecturers and semester four students. The results reveal that both lecturers and students hold positive attitudes towards code-switching, recognizing its potential benefits in terms of language learning, teaching strategies, student comfort, and lesson comprehension. Lecturers employ code-switching for various purposes such as clarification, tension easing, explaining language differences, socializing, and rephrasing utterances. Students frequently code-switch to aid language learning, foster a comfortable learning environment, and improve comprehension. While lecturers exhibit more neutral perspectives, students express stronger agreement towards code-switching. The findings highlight the pedagogical implications of code-switching, emphasizing its value as a tool for language acquisition and the need for strategic use and gradual reduction as learners' progress. Creating a supportive learning environment that balances code-switching with target language engagement is essential. By leveraging the benefits of code-switching and promoting active engagement with the target language, educators can create inclusive language learning environments that facilitate learners' overall language proficiency development.

Keywords:

Bilingual Education, Code Switching, Inclusive Classrooms, Second Language Acquisition, Teaching and Learning Strategy

Introduction

Code-switching is a linguistic practice commonly observed among bilingual individuals who possess the ability to alternate between different languages or dialects during communication. This phenomenon aids effective communication by manifesting at various linguistic levels, ranging from the exchange of individual words to complete sentences. Broadly defined, code-switching serves as a communication strategy wherein two or more languages are juxtaposed within a single conversation.

In the field of education, one of the primary roles of an English teacher in the classroom is to serve as an exemplary language user, thereby, are expected to employ English exclusively as the medium of instruction. This imperative arises from the observation that students tend to imitate the linguistic patterns and styles exhibited by their teachers during instructional sessions (Marsella, 2020). According to Crawford (2004), if teachers aim to encourage students to use the second language (L2) within the classroom, they must establish an English-speaking environment by using English themselves.

In addition to the role of the teacher, students themselves should be actively encouraged to participate in linguistic interaction, utilizing the target language as a means to directly expose themselves to linguistic input and facilitate their learning process. In a communicative language teaching setting, learners acquire and refine their proficiency in the target language through interactions with both teachers and peers. Therefore, in the context of English language teaching, particularly in classes where English serves as a second language (ESL) or a foreign language (EFL), instructors are encouraged to embrace the comprehensive use of English within the classroom, with the expectation that students will follow suit.

However, many studies revealed that in situations where when teachers share the same first language (L1) background with their students, the use of L1 by the teachers in the second language (L2) classrooms does exist (Saringat & Ismail, 2024). This pedagogical approach is employed as a strategy to assist students in improving their understanding of the target language (Desoyo, 2021). For instance, in an investigation into this issue, García (2009) found that even though teachers try to emphasize the use of the medium of instruction as the student progress is assessed using the language, the instructional conversations between students and teachers do occur in languages other than the medium of instruction. Similarly, a more recent study by Wijaya (2021) reveals that students use more than one language to communicate with the teacher and other students in the process of understanding the knowledge taught. This strategy is primarily employed to facilitate easier comprehension of the input and assist in learning the target language, particularly in classrooms where students and teachers have diverse linguistic backgrounds.

This has created conflicts in policy formulation and differences of opinion between various stakeholders such as students, educators, parents, administrators, curriculum designers and policymakers in curriculum planning and in deciding the most effective methods to achieve the objectives of teaching and learning English. Therefore, to reach a consensus on when and how code-switching can be allowed to be used in English classes is certainly challenging.

This study aims to investigate the perspectives and reasons behind code-switching among students and lecturers in classroom interaction and seeks to analyze the utilization of code-switching as a strategic approach to assist them in accomplishing their objectives, particularly

in relation to the acquisition of the English language within the ESL classroom setting at Malaysian Polytechnics.

Literature Review

One of the early scholars to discuss the phenomenon of code-switching was linguist Weinreich (1953), in his book "Language in Contact." Weinreich defined code-switching as the intermittent practice of alternating between two languages during speech. Another notable definition was proposed by Gumperz (1982), a prominent linguist, who described code-switching as the exchange of languages within the same conversation that involves two distinct grammatical systems or subsystems. Typically, code-switching occurs in the second articulated utterance, where the speaker employs the second language either to reiterate their message or respond to another person's statement. Code-switching can range from simple word exchanges to more complex instances where language is juxtaposed at the phrase or sentence level.

This dynamic practice of code-switching has garnered significant attention from other researchers too, leading to the development of various definitions that share fundamental similarities. Myers-Scotton (2001) who introduced the Markedness Model, a widely recognized framework for examining code-switching conceptualized code-switching as a linguistic practice, suggests that the term is where an individual proficient in two languages alternates between them within a single utterance or dialogue. Valdés-Fallis (1978) characterizes code-switching as the concurrent usage of two languages, while Heller (2006) emphasizes its continuous presence during a dialogue involving two or more languages. Additionally, Chana and Romaine (1984) define code-switching as the alignment of speech passages from two distinct grammatical systems or subsystems within the same speech exchange.

Based on the aforementioned definitions, this study will adopt the term "code-switching" in its most encompassing interpretation, denoting the interchange of languages at various linguistic levels, including words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, within the context of a single dialogue or conversation among individuals proficient in multiple languages.

Students' Perspective

Students generally prefer using their native language (L1) in second language (L2) classrooms to overcome language barriers. However, successful implementation requires both teacher and student proficiency in both languages. To illustrate, Al Tale and Alqahtani (2020) found that students responded positively to code-switching in reading comprehension activities. They preferred this method over instruction solely in the target language. Additionally, studies suggest students favor L2 instruction by teachers proficient in their native language (Bateman, 2008; Hertel & Sunderman, 2009; Tajgozari, 2017).

Educators often worry about using students' native language (L1) in class, especially for those proficient in the second language (L2). However, these concerns overlook the benefits of L1 use, which serves specific purposes in language learning. One such reason is students often turn to their native language (L1) to understand unfamiliar words by consulting L1 dictionaries. This helps bridge the gap between their existing linguistic knowledge and new L2 vocabulary. Additionally, using L1 for socializing with peers fosters comfort and enhances social cohesion in the classroom, as supported by Galali and Cinkara's (2017) research.

Tian and Hennebry (2016) found students at a Chinese university, teachers preferred to use L1, especially for explaining complex topics or introducing new vocabulary. Similarly, Hlas (2016) reported comparable findings in their study. Besides that, students often resort to their native language (L1) in class for translation, writing exercises, and participation in discussions. Boustani (2019) highlighted the challenge of preventing L1 use in such situations, with students naturally gravitating toward their mother tongue. Studies like Al-Musawi (2014) advocate for incorporating L1 in language learning experiences, especially for writing activities and selecting L2 vocabulary.

As a general trend, many students generally use tend to rely on their native language (L1) for academic tasks, but the extent varies based on their proficiency in the second language (L2). Those with limited L2 mastery rely more on L1 compared to those more proficient (Hanáková & Metruk, 2017).

Educators' Perspective

Though many students rely heavily on their first language (L1) in second language (L2) classrooms, broader acceptance of this strategy among policymakers and teachers remains limited. Educators' views on code-switching vary, with some endorsing it while others dissent. In a recent study by Karakaya and Dikilitaş (2020), EFL educators view code-switching as a valuable strategy for teaching and promoting classroom social interaction. Besides instructional benefits, code-switching helps alleviate students' apprehensions, enhances participation, and boosts motivation and confidence, especially when students struggle with English comprehension or expression. Creating such a comfortable environment is crucial for educators to facilitate English language acquisition.

Kohi and Lakshmi (2020) surveyed 40 EFL/ESL teachers from 12 countries, finding that they support using the first language (L1) as an instructional strategy in L2 classrooms. They use L1 for translation, content explanation, classroom management, and promoting social interactions. Relying solely on L2 can overwhelm students with limited proficiency, hindering their understanding. Jingxia (2010) found a similar trend in a study involving 60 teachers from three Chinese universities. The majority expressed strong support for bilingual approaches in EFL classrooms, noting that L1 use can be both conscious and unconscious.

However, some educators are skeptical about this practice, fearing it may disrupt the learning of the new language by diverting attention from core linguistic content and diluting instructional focus. Yao (2011) highlights a focus in English language pedagogy on minimizing code-switching, believed to hinder effective target language acquisition, without considering its underlying purposes. This effort reflects a desire to reduce students' L1 use, often seen as a sign of proficiency failure and reluctance to use English. In line with this, Şener and Korkut (2017) found most trainee teachers prioritize using the target language in EFL classrooms, arguing excessive L1 reliance restricts speaking practice and overall English communication improvement. Similarly, Alrabah, Wu, Alotaibi, and Aldaihani (2015) discovered that while students benefitted from L1 use in language learning, educators generally disapproved of this strategy.

In addition to this, there are also studies indicate that educators within the same institution may hold differing views on instructional practices. De La Campa and Nassaji (2009) found varying perspectives among teachers on adopting a bilingual approach. Similarly, Murga, Damian, and

Tacoaman (2018) observed differing attitudes, with half occasionally using L1 in class and the other half strictly prohibiting its use.

Such varied viewpoints highlight the complexity of education and instructional decision-making. These differences can arise from beliefs about language acquisition, cultural influences, teaching philosophies, or interpretations of institutional policies. Coexisting perspectives within an institution prompt dialogue and require consideration of their impact on teaching practices, student learning, and pedagogical coherence.

Usefulness and Reasons for Code-Switching

Traditionally, there are conflicting views on its effectiveness, with some endorsing it and others warning against it. In EFL and ESL education, concerns often arise about displacing L2 with L1 and its impact on L2 acquisition quality. In second language acquisition (SLA), researchers diverge on the inclusion of L1 mixing in classrooms, advocating for maximizing L2 usage (Chambers, 1991; Ellis, 2008; Franklin, 1990; Polio & Duff, 1994; Turnbull, 2001). They argue excessive L1 reliance impedes sufficient exposure to L2, slowing overall student learning. For instance, in a primary school study by Giannikas (2011), teachers refrained from using L1 in class. Results show this approach's feasibility and effectiveness, suggesting using easily understood materials and techniques in L2 for better second language acquisition (Krashen, 1985).

The bilingual approach is seen as impeding second language (L2) class objectives for multiple reasons. Scholars like (Parker, Heitzman, Fjerstad, Babbs, & Cohen, 1995) suggest that exclusive use of L2 fosters higher proficiency, with increased exposure expediting language mastery. Thus, the presence of L1 in classrooms is viewed as hindering L2 acquisition. Voicu (2012) and Wong (2010) argue for an English-only policy to replicate native language acquisition environments, ideal for ESL classrooms. In a study by Izquierdo, Martínez, Pulido, and Zúñiga (2016), heavy L1 reliance during EFL instruction was linked to low English achievement among Mexican students, with limited use of L2 for communication.

Another reason to oppose the bilingual approach is its negative effect on lesson time allocation. Explaining concepts in L1 to clarify new vocabulary and then expecting tasks to be performed in L2 disrupts teaching plans, requiring additional time (Mahboob, 2010). Finally, a prevailing belief among many educators is that incorporating L1 within an L2 classroom setting reduces learning challenges, particularly for students who possess a strong command of L2 (Ortega, 2014).

While some scholars view code-switching as a sign of linguistic limitations, however, recent research suggests it can enhance second language acquisition when used effectively. An increasing number of researchers promote its use in L2 classrooms, as it benefits both educators and students in language learning. Research confirms the brain's ability to process multiple languages simultaneously (Ellis & Natsuko, 2014). However, bilingual students may fail to leverage this cognitive advantage in learning a second language (L2) if it goes untapped or if they lack the skills to do so effectively in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom (Arenas-Iglesias, 2016; Moeller & Roberts, 2013).

In a large-scale study by De la Fuente and Goldenberg (2020) involving 54 university students, the inclusion of L1 in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom led to significant

improvements compared to classes solely using L2. Prior research also supports using L1 to enhance L2 acquisition and employ scaffolding strategies (Lopes & Ruiz-Cecilia, 2019; Bhooth, Azman, & Ismail, 2014; Shabir, 2017; De La Campa & Nassaji, 2009).

Atkinson (1987), Cook (2013), and Liu (2008) argue that using the first language (L1) doesn't harm language learning. When used judiciously, L1 can aid in acquiring a second language (L2) and optimize time efficiency. Almoayidi (2018) supports the selective use of the first language (L1) alongside the second language (L2) in classrooms, rather than replacing L2 entirely. Fauziati, Hidayat, and Susiati (2020) found teachers in Indonesia use L1 for instructions, grammar explanations, managing classrooms, and reinforcing learning, aligning with learning objectives. Similarly, Al-Musawi (2014) and Galali and Cinkara (2017) advocate for using L1 only when necessary, like aiding comprehension of unfamiliar terms. Using the native language (L1) in class is seen as beneficial for teaching and learning, especially for student control, classroom management, and instruction (Cahyani, Courcy, & Barnett, 2016). It enhances knowledge acquisition, social interaction, and classroom order among students and instructors (Fachrurrozy, Puspita & Sunarti, 2024).

Here are other studies suggest that L1 should be employed selectively and as needed.. Laufer and Nathan (2008) found it helps students compare L1 and L2, aiding acquisition through translation exercises. This approach acts as a bridge, leveraging existing L1 knowledge for nuanced L2 comprehension. Bashir and Author (2015) noted its value in disciplinary management, humor, lesson delivery, and student engagement. Gulzar (2010) found that code-switching aids in displaying empathy, emphasizing points, and facilitating comprehension through direct quotations. Taniş, Şensoy, and Atay (2020) support using the first language (L1) for instructions in writing classes. Sa'd and Qadermazi (2015) suggest that while an English-only policy can improve listening and speaking skills, strategic use of L1 helps teachers deliver instructions effectively, enhance English language learning, and reduce potential ambiguities.

Karakaya and Dikilitaş (2020) found that EFL instructors in Turkish universities use code-switching to clarify language elements. Cook (2013) suggests that L1 serves various educational purposes, including checking comprehension and maintaining discipline. Overall, incorporating L1 in classrooms aids L2 development and enhances language efficiency (Pan & Pan, 2010).

Probably the most important reason to encourage the use of L1 is it helps teachers build strong relationships with students, motivating active participation (Sarwar & Ghani, 2024); Cahyani et al., 2016). This interpersonal connection fosters student involvement, motivation, and confidence in the L2 classroom (Karakaya & Dikilitaş, 2020; Pan & Pan, 2010). Additionally, using L1 makes interactions more natural and easier, as emphasized by Lin (2013) and Cook (2001). In a recent study by Ali (2020), using the native language (L1) alongside a second language (L2) positively influences the teaching and learning process and enhances teacher-student relationships. Code-switching, as suggested by Wei (1998), allows individuals to express emotions and create a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom, strengthening teacher-student bonds.

Sholikhah & Isnaini (2024), Boustani (2019) and Afzal (2012) found that using the first language (L1) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes reduced students' speaking anxiety and improved vocabulary acquisition among low-achieving students. This fosters

student-centered learning, promoting active engagement and ownership of learning, as evidenced by Storch and Aldosari (2010), who found that pair and group work in EFL classrooms can be effectively conducted even with the use of L1.

Hence, it is evident that the use of the native language (L1) alongside second language (L2) instruction is recognized for enhancing L2 proficiency. Thus, exclusive immersion classrooms may not always be suitable, especially when students can effectively use their L1 knowledge to learn L2. Hanif (2020) stresses the importance of skillfully integrating bilingual approaches, requiring comprehensive teacher training on bilingual strategy integration.

The preceding literature review has elucidated the extensive discourse surrounding both the favorable and unfavorable facets of code switching. It can be concluded that the disparity in methodological elements, such as sample characteristics, research instruments, academic levels, contextual factors, and others, from one study to another creates a significant challenge in reaching a consensus regarding the efficacy of code-switching and subsequently hinders the generalizability of findings.

Consequently, it is foreseeable that this debate will continue as scholars strive to navigate the intricate nuances surrounding code-switching. However, given the need to identify the function of code-switching due to its important role in the ESL classroom conducting research in an effort to obtain a better understanding of this issue seems justified. Above all, this study contributes to the exploration of the most effective ways in which code-switching can assist both teachers and students in attaining their academic and social objectives within the classroom setting.

In order to achieve the aim of this research the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the attitudes of instructors and students towards the practice of code-switching?
2. To what extent do instructors and students engage in code-switching?
3. What are the underlying reasons for instructors and students to code-switch in the ESL classroom?

Methodology

This study investigates code-switching among lecturers and fourth-semester students in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at PTSB. To achieve this, a descriptive research design is employed, allowing effective summarization of individual or group characteristics (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). This design is suitable for exploring factors influencing code-switching practices among fourth-semester students in ESL classrooms at PTSB, especially when dealing with a large population (Burns & Bush, 2014). For precision, a quantitative approach is chosen, offering a systematic method for collecting and analyzing numerical data using statistical techniques.

The study involves 13 qualified English language lecturers and 235 fourth-semester students from PTSB, ensuring a minimum five years of teaching experience for lecturers. The inclusion criterion minimizes ineffective code-switching due to lack of experience. Students, representing all four academic departments, are sampled using simple random sampling, providing an unbiased representation of the student population (Kothari, 2004). The sample size adheres to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) guideline. These students are fluent in Malay and English, undergo a mandatory Communicative English Course at PTSB.

Two self-administered questionnaires, one for lecturers and one for students, were utilized to collect qualitative data. Adapted from previous studies (Horasan, 2014; Rose & Dulm, 2006; Barandagh et al., 2013; Momenian & Samar, 2011), the questionnaires consist of two sections. Section 'A' gathers demographic information, providing insights into factors influencing perspectives on code-switching. Section 'B' employs a 5-point Likert scale to capture participants' perspectives on code-switching in ESL classrooms. To address language concerns, each item includes a Malay translation, mitigating potential misinterpretations by students.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the theoretical framework of Gumperz (1982) Semantic Model of conversational code-switching. Gumperz's model has been widely employed in research to understand the functions of code-switching in various contexts. Although this model primarily focuses on code-switching in conversations in general, it provides a solid foundation for analyzing the use of code-switching in the ESL classroom.

In Gumperz's classification, code-switching was divided into two types: situational code-switching and metaphorical code-switching. Situational code-switching involves changes in the setting, topic, or participants. While, metaphorical code-switching refers to instances where code-switching occurs without being prompted by changes in the social context. Metaphorical code-switching serves various purposes, such as quotation, addressee specification, interjections, reiterations, message qualification, and personalization versus objectivization.

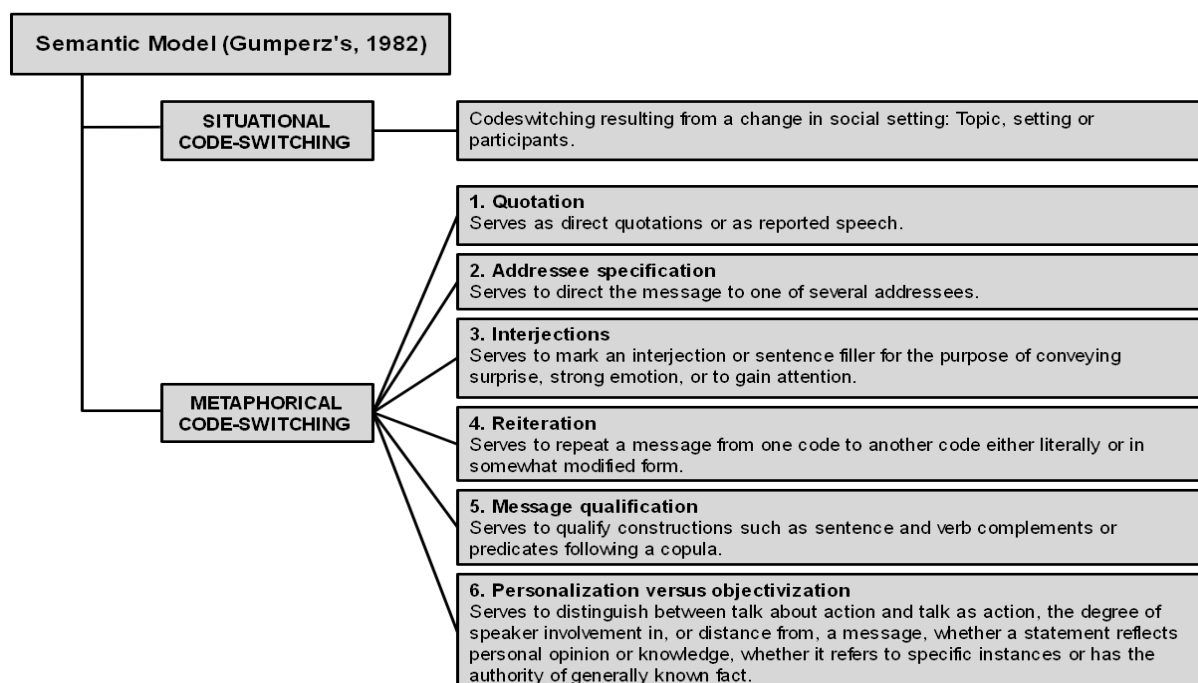


Diagram 1: Code-switching Functions in Semantic Model (Gumperz's, 1982, pp. 75-81)

However, it is important to note that Gumperz's model does not specifically address the reasons for employing code-switching in the classroom setting. To address this limitation and fulfill the objectives of this study, the researcher has adapted and modified the functions of code-switching proposed by other scholars who have specifically examined code-switching in educational contexts.

In particular, the researcher has drawn upon the works of Horasan (2014), Rose and Dulm (2006), Barandagh et al. (2013), and Momenian and Samar (2011), who have extensively studied the reasons for practicing code-switching among students in classroom settings. Their insights and findings have been instrumental in shaping the design of this research instrument and ensuring its relevance to our research objectives.

By utilizing this theoretical framework and employing the modified questionnaire, the researcher aims to shed light on the attitudes of instructors and students towards code-switching and the underlying reasons behind its usage in the ESL classroom.

Result

Lecturers' Attitude towards Code-Switching

Table 1: Lecturers' Attitude Towards Code-Switching

No .	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Code-switching should be used in the English language classroom.	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	5 (38%)	6 (46%)	1 (8%)
2.	Code-switching helps students to learn English language.	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	3 (23%)	8 (62%)	1 (8%)
3.	Code-switching is a strategy for teaching and learning process.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (23%)	9 (69%)	1 (8%)
4.	Code-switching makes students feel comfortable and secure (non- threatening) when in English language classroom.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (77%)	3 (23%)
5.	Students are able to follow my lesson better when I code-switch.	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	3 (23%)	7 (54%)	2 (15%)

The data reflects a generally positive attitude among English language lecturers towards the use of code-switching in the English language classroom. More than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that code-switching should be used (46% agree, 8% strongly agree) while almost three-quarters of them perceived that it helps students learn the English language (62% agree, 8% strongly agree). This suggests that these lecturers recognize code-switching as a useful tool in facilitating language learning. The data also revealed that lecturers view code-switching as a strategy for the teaching and learning process. A substantial majority (69%) agreed that code-switching is a viable teaching strategy, while an additional 8% strongly agreed with this statement.

Interestingly, when examining the impact of code-switching on students' comfort, all the lecturers agreed (77% agree, 23% strongly agree) that code-switching makes students feel comfortable and secure in the English language classroom. This indicates that lecturers strongly considered code-switching as a means to create a non-threatening environment, potentially leading to enhanced student participation and learning outcomes. When asked about its effect on student understanding, 54% of respondents agreed and 15% strongly agreed that code-

switching helps students follow their lessons better. These show that code-switching may improve students' comprehension and facilitate their engagement with the material.

Overall, the data reveals that the lecturers seemed to have a positive attitude towards code-switching practice. They recognize its potential benefits in terms of language learning, teaching strategies, student comfort, and lesson comprehension. These findings suggest that code-switching can be considered a valuable pedagogical tool in the English language classroom, aligning with the lecturers' perceptions and preferences.

Lecturers' Reasons for Practicing Code-Switching in English Language Classroom

Table 2: Lecturers' Reasons For Code-Switching In English Language Classroom

No.	Items	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always
1.	I code-switch because I want to give the procedural instructions.	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	4 (31%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)
2.	I code-switch because I want to manage or control the class.	5 (38%)	5 (38%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)
3.	I code-switch because I want to teach new vocabulary.	1 (8%)	6 (46%)	3 (23%)	0 (0%)	3 (23%)
4.	I code-switch because I want to teach new grammatical item.	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	4 (31%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)
5.	I code-switch because I want to clarify something.	1 (8%)	4 (31%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	5 (38%)
6.	I code-switch because there is no direct translation of a word in English language.	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	5 (38%)	1 (8%)	2 (15%)
7.	I code-switch because I want to check students' understanding.	2 (15%)	4 (31%)	5 (38%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)
8.	I code-switch because I want to rephrase English language utterance in Malay language.	2 (15%)	4 (31%)	3 (23%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)
9.	I code-switch because I want to put emphasis on the utterance.	4 (31%)	4 (31%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	0 (0%)
10.	I code-switch when moving from one activity to another.	8 (62%)	1 (8%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)
11.	I code-switch when explaining differences between first and second language.	1 (8%)	6 (46%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)
12.	I code-switch when I need to explain something quickly.	4 (31%)	4 (31%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)
13.	I code-switch because I want to ease tension and inject humour.	0 (0%)	5 (38%)	3 (23%)	3 (23%)	2 (15%)
14.	I code-switch when socialising with the students.	0 (0%)	9 (69%)	0 (0%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)

Upon analyzing the data on English language lecturers' reasons for employing code-switching in the classroom, several patterns and trends emerge. One notable trend is that the highest frequency of "often" and "always" combined is observed in the statement, "I code-switch because I want to clarify something," with a combined frequency of 46%. This implies that lecturers frequently use code-switching to provide additional explanations or ensure that students understand the content being taught. The high occurrence of code-switching for clarification suggests that lecturers prioritize effective communication and comprehension in their classrooms.

Another reason that stands out is, "I code-switch because I want to ease tension and inject humor," with a combined (often and always) frequency of 38%. This finding suggests that lecturers use code-switching as a pedagogical tool to create a relaxed and engaging classroom environment. By incorporating humor and light-heartedness, lecturers can potentially enhance students' motivation and enjoyment of the English language learning process. Additionally, "I code-switch when socializing with the students" shows a combined (often and always) frequency of 31%. This indicates that lecturers utilize code-switching to build rapport and establish a connection with their students. Socializing through code-switching may help bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, making students feel more comfortable and fostering a positive learning atmosphere.

The statement "I code-switch when explaining differences between first and second language" also has a combined (often and always) frequency of 31%. This finding suggests that lecturers frequently switch between languages to compare and contrast aspects of the students' native language with English. By doing so, lecturers can highlight nuances, address common errors, and facilitate a deeper understanding of language structures and concepts. On the other hand, the statements with the least frequency of "often" and "always" combined are "I code-switch because I want to manage or control the class" and "I code-switch when moving from one activity to another," both with a combined frequency of 8%. This implies that lecturers rely less on code-switching for classroom management and transitioning between activities. Lecturers may prefer alternative strategies for maintaining discipline and smoothly transitioning between tasks, indicating a potential focus on maintaining a consistent language environment during instruction.

It's worth noting that there are relatively fewer instances of "often" or "always" responses in the dataset, indicating that extreme or consistent use of code-switching is less prevalent among the surveyed lecturers. Instead, a majority of responses fall within the occasional or sometimes categories, suggesting that lecturers employ code-switching strategically and selectively rather than as a default approach. Overall, the data reveals that English language lecturers employ code-switching in the classroom for various purposes, including the most frequently (often and always combined) used for clarification followed by easing tension, explaining language differences, socializing and rephrasing utterances. Code-switching is seen as a tool to enhance language learning, foster engagement, and create a positive classroom environment. These findings indicate that lecturers recognize the potential benefits of code-switching in facilitating language acquisition and pedagogical interactions with students.

Students' Attitude towards Code-Switching

This data provides valuable insights into students' attitudes towards the practice of code-switching in English language classrooms. First and foremost, a remarkable majority of

students (86.7%) expressed agreement or strong agreement that code-switching should be allowed in the English language classroom. Similarly, an impressive 91.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that code-switching helps them learn the English language. This overwhelming support indicates that students recognize the value of code-switching as a linguistic resource, enabling effective communication and fostering a conducive learning environment.

Table 3: Students' Attitude Towards Code-Switching

No.	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Code-switching should be allowed in the English language classroom.	4 (0.4%)	3 (1.2%)	28 (11.7%)	132 (55%)	76 (31.7%)
2.	Code-switching helps me to learn English language.	0 (0%)	3 (1.2%)	18 (7.5%)	138 (57.5%)	81 (33.8%)
3.	Code-switching is a strategy for teaching and learning process.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	21 (8.8%)	139 (58.2%)	79 (33.1%)
4.	Code-switching makes me feel comfortable and secure (non-threatening) when in English language classroom.	0 (0%)	1 (0.4%)	24 (10%)	136 (56.9%)	78 (32.6%)
5.	I'm able to follow the lesson better when I code-switch.	1 (0.4%)	1 (0.4%)	27 (11.3%)	131 (54.6%)	80 (33.3%)

Furthermore, when asked about the role of code-switching as a strategy for teaching and learning, a substantial proportion of students agreed (58.2%) or strongly agreed (33.1%) that it serves as an effective approach. This implies that students recognize the intentional use of code-switching by teachers as a pedagogical approach rather than a mere linguistic phenomenon. A significant number of students (89.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that code-switching creates a comfortable and non-threatening environment. This sentiment suggests that code-switching allows students to express themselves more freely and engage in classroom activities without fear of judgment or making mistakes. Correspondingly, when asked whether code-switching helps students follow the lesson better, a majority of students (87.9%) agreed or strongly agreed. This finding indicates that code-switching can serve as a bridge between the students' native language and English, facilitating their comprehension and understanding of the lesson content.

Although the majority of students hold positive attitudes towards code-switching, there are some notable patterns worth mentioning. Notably, in some statements, there were a few students who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the use of code-switching. However, these percentages were relatively low, ranging from 0.4% to 1.2%. These outliers may represent a small subset of students who have differing preferences or experiences regarding code-switching. It would be beneficial to further investigate their perspectives to understand their concerns and address any potential barriers to accepting code-switching as a valuable tool in the classroom.

In summary, the data analysis reveals that a significant majority of students hold favorable attitudes toward the practice of code-switching in the English language classroom. Students

perceive code-switching as a valuable resource that aids language learning, fosters a comfortable learning environment, and improves comprehension. These findings emphasize the importance of incorporating code-switching effectively into teaching methodologies to enhance student engagement, promote successful language acquisition, and create inclusive learning environments.

Students' Opinion On How Often Code-Switching Should Be Used In English Language Classrooms

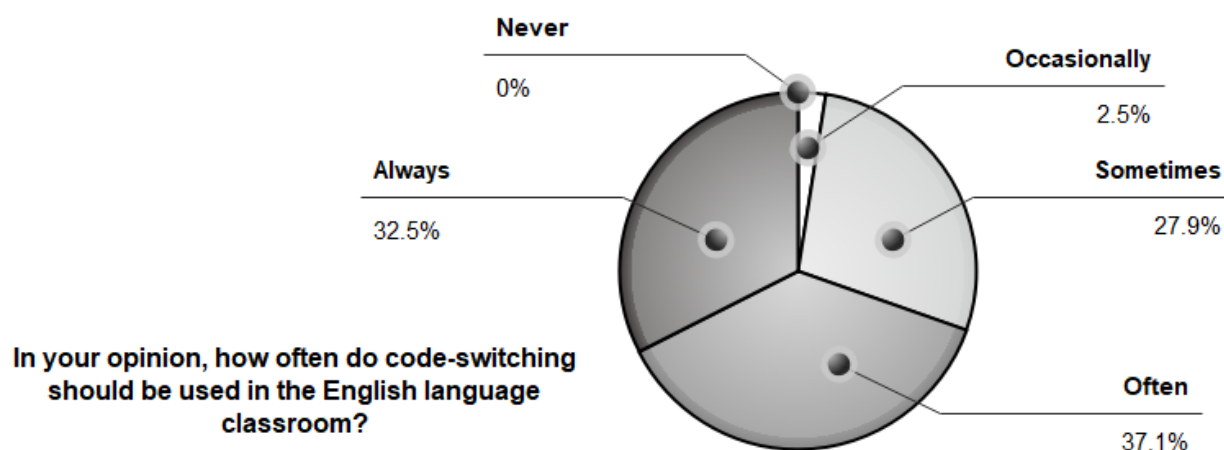


Chart 1: Students' Opinion On How Often Code-Switching Should Be Used In English Language Classrooms

From the responses received, it is evident that a significant portion of the students expressed a positive inclination towards the use of code-switching. The majority of students (37.1%) indicated that code-switching should be used "Often," followed closely by 32.5% of students who believed it should be used "Always." Together, these two categories encompass almost 70% of the participants, indicating a considerable proportion of students who view code-switching as a regular or constant practice in the classroom. Furthermore, 27.9% of the students responded with "Sometimes," suggesting that they perceive code-switching as a moderately frequent occurrence. These students acknowledge the value of code-switching but may prefer it to be used selectively or situationally rather than consistently.

A smaller percentage of students (2.5%) responded with "Occasionally," implying that they believe code-switching should be used infrequently or only on rare occasions. This group of students likely prefers to predominantly use English without incorporating elements from other languages during classroom interactions. Interestingly, none of the students responded with "Never," indicating that all participants perceived at least some level of usefulness or relevance in the practice of code-switching in the English language classroom. It is worth noting that the absence of a "Never" response suggests a general acceptance or recognition of the potential benefits that code-switching can bring to language learning.

Students Reason for Practicing Code-Switching in English Language Classroom

Analyzing the data regarding students reasons for employing code-switching in English language classrooms, several patterns and trends can be observed. One notable trend is that there is a consistent trend of higher percentages of students who code-switch often or always

compared to those who never or occasionally code-switch across the majority of the given reasons. The most prevalent motive is seeking help from lecturers or friends. A significant majority of students (87%) stated that they often or always code-switch for this reason. This suggests that code-switching serves as a valuable tool for students to bridge communication barriers and effectively convey their questions or seek clarification.

Table 4: Students' Reasons For Code-Switching In English Language Classroom

No.	Items	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Always
1.	I code-switch because I do not know the English language equivalent, so I use a Malay or Tamil word.	3 (1.2%)	7 (2.9%)	28 (11.7%)	119 (49.6%)	83 (34.6%)
2.	I code-switch because there is no direct translation of a word in English language.	1 (0.4%)	12 (5%)	45 (18.8%)	118 (49.2%)	64 (26.7%)
3.	I code-switch because I am not proficient in English language.	4 (1.7%)	14 (5.8%)	35 (14.6%)	126 (52.5%)	61 (25.4%)
4.	I code-switch when I need help from lecturers or friends.	1 (0.4%)	2 (0.8%)	28 (11.7%)	147 (61.5%)	61 (25.5%)
5.	I code-switch to socialise with teacher and friends.	2 (0.8%)	3 (1.3%)	40 (16.7%)	140 (58.6%)	54 (22.6%)
6.	I code-switch because I do not want to get embarrassed.	8 (3.3%)	23 (9.6%)	50 (20.9%)	111 (46.4%)	47 (19.7%)
7.	I code-switch when explaining.	0 (0%)	4 (1.7%)	28 (11.8%)	145 (61.2%)	60 (25.3%)
8.	I code-switch to rephrase English language utterance in Malay language.	0 (0%)	6 (2.5%)	35 (14.8%)	144 (60.8%)	52 (21.9%)
9.	I code-switch to attract attention and to have the floor.	11 (4.6%)	29 (12.2%)	84 (35.4%)	80 (33.8%)	33 (13.9%)
10.	I code-switch to put emphasis on the utterance.	1 (0.4%)	7 (3%)	46 (19.4%)	138 (58.2%)	45 (19%)
11.	I code-switch to help me to maintain the flow of a conversation.	1 (0.4%)	3 (1.3%)	32 (13.5%)	133 (56.1%)	68 (28.7%)

Similarly, another significant finding is that code-switching is frequently used for explanation purposes. A substantial majority of students (86.5%) reported that they often or always code-switch when explaining, indicating that code-switching allows students to provide clearer and more comprehensive explanations by utilizing familiar terms and concepts from their native languages. Another notable pattern is the high percentage of students (84.8%) who indicated that they often or always code-switch as a strategy for maintaining conversational flow. Furthermore, another important finding that mirrors this is the significant proportion of students who reported often or always code-switching because not knowing the English language equivalent (84.2%)

Lastly, a substantial majority of students (82.5%) responded that they code-switch to put emphasis on their utterances, often or always. This finding indicates that students utilize code-switching as a linguistic tool to enhance the impact and clarity of their messages, emphasizing specific points or concepts during communication. In summary, the data reveals that students frequently employ code-switching in English language classrooms for various reasons. These findings emphasize the multifaceted nature of code-switching as a linguistic resource utilized by students to enhance their communication and learning experiences in the English language classroom.

Discussion

This study delves into the intricate dynamics of code-switching practices within ESL classrooms, shedding light on both students' and lecturers' perspectives. It unravels a diverse array of motivations behind code-switching, offering valuable insights into the nuanced reasons driving this linguistic phenomenon in the classroom.

Respondents Perspectives on Code-Switching Practice

Lecturers generally support code-switching as a beneficial strategy in ESL classrooms to aid language learning, foster a supportive atmosphere, and bolster students' comprehension of instructional material. They view code-switching as instrumental in facilitating lesson understanding, enhancing English language acquisition, and promoting students' comfort and security in the classroom. This aligns with prior research by Karakaya and Dikilitaş (2020) and Kohi and Lakshmi (2020), highlighting the social and motivational benefits of code-switching in language learning.

However, some educators express skepticism about code-switching, fearing it may disrupt the learning process. This stance is echoed by Yao (2011), while Şener and Korkut (2017) found that trainee teachers prioritize the use of the target language. These divergent perspectives within the same institution were also observed in the studies by De La Campa and Nassaji (2009) and Murga et al. (2018), highlighting the complex nature of instructional decision-making and the influence of various factors.

These contrasting views underscore the complexity of instructional decision-making, influenced by various factors such as beliefs about language acquisition, cultural influences, teaching philosophies, and institutional policies. Nonetheless, the data suggest that code-switching can be a valuable instructional strategy, fostering comprehension, a supportive environment, and language acquisition.

Students overwhelmingly favor code-switching, viewing it as beneficial for learning, making them feel secure, and improving comprehension, in line with prior research (Al Tale & Alqahtani, 2020; Bateman, 2008; Hertel & Sunderman, 2009; Tajgozari, 2017). They prefer L1 use for socializing and comprehending complex topics, mirroring previous findings (Galali & Cinkara, 2017; Tian & Hennebry, 2016). This preference aligns with the challenges of preventing L1 use in various activities (Boustani, 2019).

While lecturers tend to hold more neutral views, students strongly support code-switching. This disparity may stem from the lecturers' role in considering instructional approaches and students' focus on their learning experiences. However, it is imperative for lecturers to heed students' perspectives, given their positive outlook on code-switching.

Respondents Reasons for Code-Switching

The reasons for lecturers' code-switching in ESL classrooms are diverse, including pedagogical and socio-communicative purposes such as giving instructions, managing the class, teaching new concepts, clarifying ideas, and fostering a positive atmosphere. Previous studies by Fauziati et al. (2020), Al-Musawi (2014), and Cahyani et al. (2016) support these findings, highlighting code-switching's role in instruction and classroom management, as well as its facilitation of social interaction and comprehension. Gulzar (2010) emphasizes code-switching's empathetic function and its role in emphasizing points and aiding comprehension. Similarly, students code-switch for various reasons, including limited English proficiency, lack of direct translations, the need for assistance, socialization, avoidance of embarrassment, and maintaining conversational flow. Research by Almoayidi (2018), Taniş et al. (2020), Ali (2020), and Boustani (2019) supports these findings, illustrating code-switching's role in bridging languages, reducing anxiety, and enhancing vocabulary acquisition among low-achieving students.

Regarding code-switching frequency, lecturers tend to do so less frequently than students, possibly due to their role as language facilitators prioritizing target language acquisition. In contrast, students, particularly those with limited English proficiency, rely more heavily on code-switching for communication and comprehension. Understanding these differences can inform instructional practices, helping educators balance target language acquisition with effective communication and support students' diverse needs while promoting English proficiency.

Limitation

This research, like any study, has limitations. It was conducted solely at PTSB with semester four students, so the findings may not apply to students in other semesters or at other Malaysian polytechnics. Also, the assumption that all semester four students at PTSB can code-switch proficiently introduces uncertainty about the generalizability of the results.

Conclusion

While the study supports the positive impact of code-switching, it emphasizes the need to avoid overreliance. Code-switching should be viewed as a strategic tool, gradually reduced as learners' progress in language proficiency. Educators should strike a balance between providing linguistic support and encouraging target language engagement. There are promising avenues for future research on code-switching in ESL classrooms, including longitudinal studies, investigations into its impact on different language skills, exploration of specific contexts and learner populations, examination of digital tools' role, and understanding stakeholders' perspectives. Continued research will refine instructional practices and inform supportive language learning policies.

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