# Code-Switching in EFL Classrooms: Students' and Teachers' Attitudes in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam

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## ABSTRACT

|  | This study investigated the attitudes of EFL students and teachers toward code-switching in EFL classrooms. Participants included 60 English majors and 10 EFL teachers from schools in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. The research gathered data through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The conclusions indicated that participants had positive attitudes toward code-switching. Students acknowledged that code-switching not only aids in addressing English competence and communicative problems but also sparks interest, confidence, and motivation in language learning. Teachers asserted that code-switching increases the effectiveness of EFL classrooms; however, some expressed feelings of shame and unprofessionalism. The functions of student code-switching were to maintain the discourse, engage and communicate with classmates, and prevent miscommunications. Providing understanding of lesson content, manipulating classrooms, and strengthening classroom relationships were functions of teacher code-switching. The study has implications for instructors and students in EFL contexts and is a valuable resource for further research on code-switching. |
|---|---|
| **Keywords**: attitudes, code-switching, EFL classrooms, functions |  |

## Introduction

In the digital era, English is seen as a vital tool for global communication among countries and regions. It is also a means by which people exchange information, knowledge, experience, and even cultures. Therefore, in Vietnam, English has been made a compulsory subject in the educational system for students in grades 3 to 12 (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018). This led to the organization of many bilingual classes across the country, and a tendency to incorporate language varieties during conversations in EFL classrooms is emerging. It comes with the emergence of code-switching as a popular phenomenon.

Both teachers and students prefer code-switching for different purposes. Teachers implement code-switching as a useful technique to manage the classroom, simplify instructions, translate complex terms, provide basic understanding, and relax learners (Liu, 2010). This indicates that

code-switching is an effective method for teaching a foreign language. Meanwhile, students engage in code-switching to reflect on their learning, discuss grammatical structures, hold the floor, affirm, and give humorous talks, which facilitate their education in multiple ways (Horasan, 2014).

In the Mekong Delta context, considerable research has identified several factors influencing students' communication, including limited vocabulary and poor learning environments (Ly et al., 2023; Vo et al., 2018). Meanwhile, Dar et al. (2014) stated that switching languages is widely used in EFL and ESL courses where students' communicative proficiency is inadequate. In accordance with this, Modupeola (2013) suggested that when teachers have less time to explain confusing words thoroughly, code-switching is employed as a pedagogical tool to provide precise classroom instruction and to give students opportunities to engage in conversations and improve comprehension. With the benefit of code-switching, it appears to be a supportive strategy in second-language teaching for students with limited English proficiency. However, many studies found that code-switching has negative effects because the alternation between languages leads to misunderstandings of the speakers' messages. On the other hand, this language change might make listeners feel disrespected (Rahmatova & Qurbonova, 2018).

As Grant and Nguyen (2017) stated, code-switching is prevalent in EFL classes at schools and universities in Vietnam. However, research examining the attitudes of EFL students and teachers toward this phenomenon in the Mekong Delta is limited. For this reason, this study aims to investigate the attitudes of both students and teachers regarding the application of code-switching in EFL classrooms. Simultaneously, the study seeks to explore the functions of code-switching in learning and teaching English as a foreign language. Through addressing this research gap, this study contributes to a broader literature on code-switching. The findings are intended to provide insight into the future use of code-switching in EFL contexts.

## Literature review

### Definition of Code-Switching

The concept of code-switching has been defined in many studies. According to Poplack (1980), it was defined as the linguistic replacement of sentences of two languages in a dialogue. Fareed et al. (2016) referred to it as the switching of people from their first language (L1) to their second language (L2) and vice versa within their conversation. In line with this, Lin (2008) and Ngo (2025) regarded code-switching as the use of alternation between languages for specific purposes. Correspondingly, code-switching is the use of diverse combinations of languages within a single speech event by bilinguals (Gardner-Chloros, 2009, as cited in Horasan, 2014). While Manal A.Ismai (2015, as cited in Rahmatova & Qurbonova, 2018) explained that code-switching is the practice in which language users choose or change linguistic components to contextualize a conversation in an interactive context, Shafi et al. (2020) demonstrated that code-switching allows for the performance and completion of various tasks with no effect on the initial setting. In this regard, Heredia and Altarriba (2001) pointed out that bilinguals employ code-switching to switch between languages, with accompanying grammatical and functional

rules, in a common context. This means it is a complicated phenomenon used by bilingual or multilingual people to transition between languages in the same conversation.

## *Functions of Code-Switching in Classrooms*

The use of L1 languages, in addition to the target language, in classrooms for specific purposes is considered classroom code-switching. Strikingly, Rose and van Dulm (2006) found that, to achieve academic objectives, both teachers and students employed code-switching functions, such as expanding, confirming, and clarifying. In their study of student functions, Narasuman et al. (2019) asserted that they alternated between L1 and L2 to become proficient in a foreign language. Additionally, Obaidullah (2016) demonstrated that students code-switch to acquire information efficiently and to understand course materials. On the other hand, while Mattson and Burenhult (1990, as cited by Sert, 2005) pointed out that teachers were ignorant of the benefits or consequences of alternation, it has been discovered that several fundamental functions of the phenomena are beneficial for language acquisition. Consequently, to understand the functions of code-switching in classrooms in more detail, they would be presented in the sections on student code-switching and teacher code-switching.

## *Student Code-Switching's Functions*

Students prefer to use code-switching as a coping strategy due to a lack of L2 language competence (Selamat, 2014). Through code-switching, learners maintain conversational flow despite their target-language proficiency being inadequate. As cited in Sert (2005, p. 3), the functions of student code-switching comprise "equivalence, floor-holding, reiteration, and conflict control" (Eldridge, 1996).

According to Sert (2005), for equivalence, students used their native language to continue the discussion when they could not explain a specific lexical item in the second language. The equivalent function of code-switching helps them deal with gaps in competence. Regarding the second category, floor-holding, learners use their L1 to fill the conversation's gaps because they do not recall or use proper L2 structures. Therefore, to keep the dialogue going, they code-switch to convey their thoughts. However, it may eventually lead to a reduction in fluency because linguistic substitution could be harmful to the acquisition of more language. Referring to the third one, reiteration, the research explains that students tend to code-switch when they think they may not have accurately conveyed the message in the intended language, or when they consider it a better way to show their teachers that they understand the material or what they are learning. The last one, conflict control, illustrates students' intention to convey meaning by using code swapping as a strategy to prevent misunderstandings or to use words implicitly for certain goals. Additionally, this function helps students avoid misinterpretation by providing culturally comparable vocabulary in both the target and native languages. Equivalently, Greggio and Gil (2007) found that learner utterance functions were primarily concerned with problems, such as keeping the conversation moving, bridging a language gap, giving and receiving equal meaning in both languages, questioning grammar principles or structures, and elucidating comprehension of grammar rules. The study by Barredo (1997, as cited in Ataş, 2012) aligned with these findings because the author observed Spanish-Basque pupils and asserted that they tended to code-switch for several reasons, ranging from simplicity, as a means of bridging linguistic gaps, to the complexity of utterance levels. According to studies, learners routinely

switch between their first and second languages to overcome language barriers, maintain interaction, handle unclear terms, and ask for clarification on grammatical rules to make them comprehensible.

### Teacher Code-Switching's Functions

In the context of teaching a second or foreign language, code-switching has been broadly used as a pedagogical tool (Avery, 2015). Ferguson (2003) reported that the findings of studies on the functions of code-switching were similar across settings. From the results, Ferguson categorized code-switching's functions into three main types as follows:

- Code switching for curriculum access
- Code switching for classroom management discourse
- Code switching for interpersonal relations

(Ferguson, 2003, p.2)

The first category mentioned the use of code-switching to present lesson content in an understandable way. Simultaneously, the second one tends to encourage, correct, commend, and control students' attitudes. The third category emphasizes the classroom as a social and emotional space where students and teachers negotiate identities and connections. On the other hand, the classroom encompasses both societal and emotional dimensions. Nevertheless, Sert (2005) presented three main categories originally developed by Mattson and Burenhult (1999), consisting of "topic switch, affective functions, and repetitive functions" (p. 2). With topic switch, depending on the subject, teachers will modify the language they use, while with affective function, teachers employ code-switching to foster close relationships and connections with students. The latter, repetitive functions are applied to make language content comprehensible. Canagarajah (1995, as cited in Selamat, 2014) described teachers' code-switching into two functional categories, as detailed below.

### Management of the classroom

- Starting the lesson
- Discussing instructions
- Asking for assistance
- Handling discipline
- Encouraging
- Praising
- Teacher regulations
- Teacher warnings
- Moderation
- Pleading
- Informal conversations

### Transmission of content

- Revising
- Explaining
- Discussing cultural implications
- Translating in parallel
- Interacting with students informally

Although teacher functions are proposed in various studies with different numbers of types and names, their uses are relevant together. Consequently, the study obtains that teachers prefer to use code-switching to access the curriculum, manage the classroom, and build interpersonal relations.

*Previous Studies*

In terms of attitudes towards teachers' and students' use of code-switching, multiple studies have examined code-switching in EFL or ESL classrooms. Firstly, Dar et al. (2014) found that code-switching effectively works as a teaching method in language classes. This was because teachers used code-switching as a form of instruction to help students understand challenging material, provide examples from L1 since L2 lacked relevant terminology, help learners grasp concepts, highlight specific ideas, and offer guidance. Nonetheless, some instructors held the view that pupils cannot absorb an appropriate model for learning English if they frequently use their native language during lessons. Finally, because the study examined teachers' perceptions, the authors concluded that they had positive cognitive and behavioral attitudes.

Equivalently, Selamat (2014) analyzed perceptions and beliefs regarding code-switching in Malaysian ESL classes and found generally favorable attitudes among participants. In cognitive attitudes, teachers viewed code-switching as an effective pedagogical tool that facilitated learning and managed classroom emotions, though opinions varied regarding its drawbacks on language learning. For students, code-switching emerged as a beneficial strategy for language acquisition, comprehension, and motivation. Nevertheless, inconsistent use of the L2 was noted among students, with some opting not to use their native language at all. Behavioral attitudes revealed that teachers frequently employed the first language as a practical solution to classroom challenges, while students utilized code-switching to navigate language proficiency issues and improve group dynamics. The study, however, did not explicitly address the participants' affective attitudes, focusing instead on perceptions, beliefs, and code-switching functions.

Similarly, Patmasari et al. (2022) investigated the perceptions of both teachers and students toward the utilization of code-switching. The study revealed that most students had a positive attitude towards teachers' use of code-switching in classrooms. Specifically, this use in English classrooms may increase their opportunities to be proficient in English. Furthermore, students responded to the reasons teachers code-switched, including translating abstract terms, providing instructions, motivating their students, managing the classroom, and assessing students' comprehension. As a result, although this study investigated students' cognitive attitudes, their behavior and emotions toward code-switching were not examined. Otherwise, teachers acknowledged the importance of English as an L2 in the classroom, which is why they limited themselves to code-switching in class. They also confirmed that they code-switched to ensure students' understanding of the material, to give directions, to explain lesson content, and to clarify abstract terminology. Hence, teachers' cognitive and behavioral attitudes were assessed, and conclusions were drawn.

In line with the above examination, Horasan (2014) conducted research on teachers' and students' perceptions of code-switching in classrooms. The researcher concluded that the participants shared a belief that code-switching helped to draw attention and tell jokes. Besides,

they viewed code-switching as a communication method to promote successful learning at the earliest stages. Consequently, completely stopping the use of code-switching in EFL classes should not be a rigid policy. Put another way, in this circumstance, Horasan (2014) found that all participants had positive attitudes toward code-switching in terms of cognitive perception. Additionally, the study found that a function of code-switching used by students and teachers was to comment on work and discuss grammar. It was evidence that the author investigated participants' behavioral attitudes.

Fareed et al. (2016) also conducted research to investigate how ESL/EFL students perceived teachers' use of code-switching in English classes. The findings indicated that, while some students believed educators' code-switching restricted their interaction with English, they held a positive attitude toward this practice. The students also said that teachers' code-switching boosted their self-assurance and motivation to learn. However, the study focused only on students' perceptions, resulting in a lack of teacher perspectives on the application of code-switching in classrooms. Overall, the survey was unable to draw conclusions about every facet of attitudes.

Under other circumstances, Rahmatova and Qurbonova (2018) found that speakers frequently code-switched when they felt furious or exhausted; however, they occasionally conveyed their emotions by code-switching when they were joyful. That is, code-switching enabled communicators to recognize their mood within communications. According to Lee (2006, as cited in Rahmatova & Qurbonova, 2018), code-switching should be used in classroom discussions because it enables students to participate in conversations and speak freely. So, the paper examined the affective aspect of attitude, clearly indicating the role of switchers' emotions in code-switching. Subsequently, the authors discussed the behavioral component of attitude through listing the specific functions of code-switching. Namely, code-switching brings typical merits, such as clarifying the target, explaining grammatical points, reducing gaps in specific words, and enhancing the effectiveness of class discussion activities. In contrast, the authors reported that code-switching not only influences *information comprehension but also affects* the efficacy of speech because certain terms, including metaphors, groups of words, or admonitions, are restricted. As a consequence, these are the cognitive judgments and beliefs about code-switching. That is, the authors covered the three facets of code-switchers' attitudes.

Although many studies indicated a favorable attitude among participants toward code-switching in EFL contexts, they were unable to assess all facets of participants' attitudes. Evidently, the earlier studies placed less emphasis on participants' emotional component. That is, while they have examined cognitive and behavioral components, the affective component is less discussed.

*Research Gaps*

Although numerous studies have examined attitudes toward code-switching in EFL or ESL classes, their conclusions were varied. In particular, many of them examined the cognitive and behavioral components of attitudes, such as perceptions (Dar et al., 2014; Horasan, 2014; Fareed et al., 2016; Patmasari et al., 2022; Selamat, 2014) or beliefs (Selamat, 2014). Very limited research has explored the affective aspect of attitudes, encompassing participants'

emotions or feelings towards code-switching in EFL classrooms, which remains significantly underexplored. Besides, studies from other EFL contexts, such as Malaysia (Selamat, 2014) or Indonesia (Patmasari et al., 2022), have shown that teachers and students have positive attitudes towards the implementation of code-switching in language classrooms; however, this finding has not been substantiated in the specific context of the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. This suggests that it is unclear whether these positive attitudes towards code-switching *generalize to* this new context. Therefore, the present study is encouraged to address this research gap by comprehensively investigating all three components of attitudes among students and teachers in the Mekong Delta.

## Research Questions

The research attempts to address the following questions in light of relevant studies and their conclusions about code-switching:

1. What are the attitudes of English-majored sophomores and EFL teachers toward the use of code-switching in EFL classrooms?
2. What are the functions of student and teacher code-switching in EFL classrooms?

# Methods

## Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted at a university in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. The questionnaires were distributed to 70 participants. Namely, there were 60 English-majored sophomores, including 12 males and 48 females (19-20 years old). Moreover, 10 EFL teachers, 2 male and 8 female, have worked at public and private schools in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. They are between the ages of 24 and 39, have been teachers for 1 to more than 10 years, and have enrolled in a master's program. The participants were selected for data collection using convenience sampling because they were accessible and aligned with the scope. Subsequently, five instructors with over three years of experience instructing various target students were selected for the semi-structured interview. Finally, participants would feel free to voice their thoughts, as their answers and personal information would remain confidential solely for the study.

## Design of the Study

The current study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In particular, two questionnaires: one for students and one for teachers. Each comprises two distinct parts: attitudes toward code-switching and attitudes toward its functions. They are the most common instruments for the quantitative method. The questionnaire is adapted from Issarangkura Na Ayuttaya (2017), Pham and Nguyen (2024), and Selamat (2014), using a five-point Likert scale with responses ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The bilingual questionnaire has 15 closed-ended questions for students and 22 questions for teachers. Each questionnaire has two sections: participants' attitudes toward utilizing code-switching in EFL classrooms and the functions of code-switching in classrooms. The pilots had run with 10 random students and 3 teachers before the official questionnaires were sent to participants to assess reliability. As a result, the Cronbach's Alpha for the student questionnaire was 0.874, while the teacher questionnaire received a score of 0.868. These results indicate a high level of reliability for both

questionnaires, enabling their official distribution to participants for data collection.

In the latter, five teachers who had participated in the previous survey were interviewed in a semi-structured manner. Furthermore, each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, with 12 questions adapted from Selamat (2014). For the interview questions, the researcher conducted a pilot to test the interviewees' comprehension. Following the pilot test, the questions were reworded and asked differently to enable the interviewees to provide insightful responses to the research. Besides, the researcher, as the interviewer, and the interviewees can also use both Vietnamese and English to convey ideas with the best comprehension. The interview recordings will be transcribed and carefully checked for analysis. The research will use thematic analysis of the interview transcripts to interpret the qualitative data. However, the study conducted interviews only with teachers due to time constraints during the research.

### Data collection & analysis

After receiving responses from the sample, the researcher will use the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 to analyze the questionnaire data. Participants' responses will be calculated and presented afterward to show the levels of their perceptions. As presented by Sözen and Güven (2019), the mean scores are described as follows:
- Strongly disagree: 1.00-1.80
- Disagree: 1.81-2.60
- Neutral: 2.61-3.40
- Agree: 3.41-4.20
- Strongly Agree: 4.21-5.00

Regarding the scores, item values range from 1.00 to 2.60, indicating negative attitudes, and from 3.41 to 5.00, indicating positive attitudes toward the statements. Regarding the interview data, a thematic analysis will be conducted on the transcript. The researcher will read it carefully to uncover deep insights, then compare them with the survey responses to determine whether they align. The interview questions are designed to complement the questionnaire, facilitating effective comparison. Microsoft Word will create and adjust tables that present the data results.

## Results/Findings

### The Reliability of the Questionnaires

The student questionnaire was administered to English-majored sophomores to gather their responses regarding code-switching and its functions in EFL classes. The Cronbach's Alpha for the last questionnaire was 0.873, which, compared to the acceptable value of 0.61, indicates that it is a reliable measure. This result proved the questionnaire's reliability.

**Table 1**

The reliability of the student questionnaire

| Cronbach's Alpha | n of items |
|---|---|
| 0.873 | 15 |

Equivalently, a Cronbach's Alpha test was performed to assess the internal consistency reliability of the teacher questionnaire, which was used to gather the teachers' attitudes on code-

switching use and its functions. The result was 0.854, a good score that established the questionnaire's credibility.

**Table 2**

The reliability of the teacher questionnaire

| Cronbach's Alpha | n of items |
|---|---|
| 0.854 | 22 |

*Students' Attitudes toward Using Code-Switching*

A descriptive statistics test was performed to determine the mean scores of English-majored students' attitudes toward using code-switching in classrooms. The test results are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3**

Students' attitudes toward using code-switching

|  | n | M | S.D. |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | **3.58** | **0.62** |
| I find the class more interesting when the teacher speaks in my language. | 60 | 3.53 | 0.97 |
| I feel more assured and motivated to study English when the teacher speaks in my own tongue. | 60 | 3.62 | 0.94 |
| Using my mother tongue improves my second language acquisition. | 60 | 3.48 | 1.08 |
| By speaking in my own language, I can concentrate on the subject without being distracted by new vocabulary. | 60 | 3.65 | 1.02 |
| I can communicate with my peers more effectively when I utilize my first language. | 60 | 3.63 | 0.96 |
| During classroom instruction, I prefer that the teacher speak solely English and not my native tongue. | 60 | 3.00 | 0.88 |
| I would like the teacher to use both English and my first language during lessons. | 60 | 4.40 | 0.96 |
| I have difficulties understanding since the teacher does not employ my own language to clarify new terms, subjects, or ideas. | 60 | 3.72 | 0.98 |
| I have trouble focusing on English classes when the instructor speaks solely in English. | 60 | 3.50 | 1.14 |
| In conversation, code-switching confuses me. | 60 | 3.22 | 1.18 |

As can be seen in Table 3, most students agreed with the statements (overall M=3.58, SD=0.62). More specifically, participants' level of like-mindedness varies, as mean scores range from 3.48 (SD=1.08) to 4.40 (SD=0.96). The participants thought that using their first language makes them enjoy the classroom, boosts motivation and confidence, helps them acquire a second language better, pays more attention to lessons, communicates with friends effectively, and is interested in using both English and their first language in classes with teachers. Besides, many students found it hard to comprehend new words, subjects, or ideas, and were distracted by these new words when their teachers used only English to explain and give instructions in class, in the absence of their first language. However, many students express neutral opinions about using code-switching to get their attention in conversations (M=3.22, SD=1.18) and prefer to speak only English in the classroom (M=3.00, SD=0.88). These data show that students prefer

code-switching in classrooms and struggle when it is absent.

## Student Code-Switching's Functions

Subsequently, descriptive statistics were conducted to identify the functions of code-switching that English-majored students used in the classroom. The detailed results are presented in Table 4 below.

**Table 4**

Student code-switching's functions

|  | n | M | S.D. |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | **3.87** | **0.68** |
| I utilize code-switching when I can't communicate in English. | 60 | 3.82 | 0.95 |
| I employ code-switching to keep the conversation going. | 60 | 3.62 | 0.94 |
| I interact with my friends who speak the same language by using code-switching. | 60 | 3.80 | 0.95 |
| I communicate complex words and phrases to my classmates by using code-switching. | 60 | 4.13 | 0.85 |
| I employ code-switching to prevent misunderstandings. | 60 | 3.98 | 0.89 |

Students largely admitted to using code-switching for different functions, as shown in Table 4 (overall M=3.87, SD=0.68). According to the table, students tend to switch languages when they are unable to continuously express their ideas in English (M=3.82, SD=0.95), and to help them maintain the flow of communication (M=3.62, SD=0.94). Moreover, a group of participants acknowledged that they code-switch when interacting (M=3.80, SD=0.95) and talk about words or phrases in greater complexity with same-language friends (M=4.13, SD=0.85). A majority of respondents also agreed that the use of code-switching helps them avoid misunderstandings during the processing of language use (M=3.98, SD=0.89). This shows that code-switching helps students address communication issues.

## Teachers' Attitudes toward Using Code-Switching

A descriptive statistics test was conducted to examine EFL teachers' attitudes toward code-switching in classrooms. The results of the test are shown in Table 5, including mean scores (M) and standard deviations (S.D.).

From Table 5, the majority of teachers who took part in the survey tended to agree with views about code-switching, with an overall mean of 3.63 (SD=0.37). It was demonstrated through the mean scores running from 3.50 to 4.40 Particularly, code-switching helps the learning process easier (M=3.90, SD= 0.57), should be a part of EFL classrooms (M=3.70, SD=0.95), be an effective and save-time method (M=4.00; SD= 0.82), makes learning outcomes better (M=3.80, SD=0.79), helps to teach grammatical more productively (M=4.40, SD=0.52), be useful to give directions (M=3.50, SD=0.85), and should be used in cooperative activities (M=3.50, SD=0.97). Moreover, respondents also approved of the claim that code-switching causes students' dependence on teachers (M=3.80, SD=0.42) and that teaching English is better than teaching only in English-only classrooms (M=3.50, SD=0.53). It indicates that some teachers believe code-switching is beneficial in classrooms, whereas others believe it negatively affects students' learning.

**Table 5**
Teachers' attitudes toward using code-switching

|  | n | M | S.D. |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | **3.63** | **0.37** |
| Code-switching makes learning a language easier. | 10 | 3.90 | 0.57 |
| Code-switching is a method that will make students more dependent on the teacher. | 10 | 3.80 | 0.42 |
| An essential component of the EFL lesson should involve code-switching. | 10 | 3.70 | 0.95 |
| In EFL classes, the students' native language and English must be kept strictly apart. | 10 | 3.00 | 0.82 |
| Code-switching is a productive and time-efficient method. | 10 | 4.00 | 0.82 |
| Classrooms with solely English are the greatest places to teach English. | 10 | 3.50 | 0.53 |
| The quality of English will decrease as a consequence of the usage of other languages in EFL classes. | 10 | 3.40 | 0.84 |
| A native speaker is the best person for instructing English. | 10 | 3.40 | 1.08 |
| Learners have greater outcomes the more English is utilized. | 10 | 3.80 | 0.79 |
| Students can focus better in EFL classes when they use L1. | 10 | 3.30 | 0.82 |
| Teachers can use code-switching to illustrate grammatical structure or explain the distinctions among L1 and L2 more effectively. | 10 | 4.40 | 0.52 |
| As teachers change the language to provide instructions, it is helpful. | 10 | 3.50 | 0.85 |
| When participating in collaborative tasks, students ought to be allowed to speak their native language. | 10 | 3.50 | 0.97 |

In addition, teachers had neutral perceptions of four items, such as "In EFL classes, the students' native language and English must be kept strictly apart." "The quality of English will decrease as a consequence of the usage of other languages in EFL classes." "A native speaker is the best person for instructing English," and "Students can focus better in EFL classes when they use L1." with the same mean score, M=3.40, and SD=0.82, SD=0.84, SD=1.08, SD=0.82, respectively. The data show that teachers did not view code-switching as good or bad in EFL classrooms.

*Teacher Code-Switching's Functions*

Another descriptive statistic test was carried out to identify the function of code-switching utilized by teachers in EFL classrooms. The test findings are shown in Table 6.

As shown in Table 6, most teachers agreed to the use of code-switching between Vietnamese and English in their English lessons for specific purposes, with an overall mean of 3.90 and SD=0.50. It is shown when the mean scores are arranged from 3.50 to 4.30 with different SDs. Specifically, teachers tend to utilize code-switching to get students' attention (M=4.10, SD=0.74), the explicate meaning of vocabulary and sentences (M=3.90, SD=0.74), teach grammar effectively (M=4.30, SD=0.82), translate referential words (M=4.00, SD=0.47), organize tasks (M=3.70, SD=0.82), manage classes (M=3.50, SD=0.71), reduce student anxiety (M=4.00, SD=0.94), and increase students' confidence and motivation to learn English (M=4.20, SD=0.92). Nevertheless, some teachers responded with an impartial view regarding

code-switching, stating, "I convey stories or jokes by using code-switching" (M=3.40, SD=1.08). The results mean that teachers apply code-switching to teach lesson content, manage tasks and the classroom, and encourage learners.

**Table 6**

Teacher code-switching's functions

|  | n | M | S.D. |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | **3.90** | **0.50** |
| I draw attention by using code-switching. | 10 | 4.10 | 0.74 |
| To clarify the meaning of terms and phrases, I employ code-switching. | 10 | 3.90 | 0.74 |
| I utilize code-switching to effectively teach grammar. | 10 | 4.30 | 0.82 |
| I employ code-switching for translating referential words. | 10 | 4.00 | 0.47 |
| I manage tasks for class using code-switching. | 10 | 3.70 | 0.82 |
| I practice code-switching to keep the classroom orderly. | 10 | 3.50 | 0.71 |
| I convey stories or jokes by using code-switching. | 10 | 3.40 | 1.08 |
| I implement code-switching to help students feel less anxious when studying English. | 10 | 4.00 | 0.94 |
| I employ code-switching to boost learners' confidence and drive to learn English. | 10 | 4.20 | 0.92 |

The semi-structured interview was conducted with five teachers who have taught English for more than 3 years and participated in the previous survey. After transcribing the interview recording, many interesting insights emerged, highlighting a positive attitude toward code-switching in English classes. First, all the teachers (5 out of 5) agreed that code-switching is a good way for students to overcome difficulties while learning English.

> *Yes. It is a good way to help students understand lesson content swiftly when students' English proficiency is inadequate. (T2)*

> *Yes. It will be a great method for diverse-competent classes in which some students cannot comprehend the lesson, and for which 100% English is used to teach. (T3)*

The majority of teachers, 80%, preferred to teach grammatical structures in Vietnamese to enhance students' comprehension. They believed it was better to use Vietnamese to make the grammar explicit, as speaking entirely in English may lead to misunderstandings among students with varying levels of English proficiency.

Four out of five teachers used the same speech, with natural code-switching. As students show their lesson incomprehension, teachers switch the language to help students access the content more readily, or when they show distraction, teachers use it to regain students' attention. Meanwhile, the other said that he plans to switch the language.

> *Yes, I have plans when I change the language in my classes. In vocabulary or grammar lessons, since I consider words, word groups, or grammar points difficult to explain and teach in English, I code-switch to increase the effectiveness of the lesson content. (T2)*

In terms of student code-switching, teachers said that students prefer to code-switch because of the following reasons: filling conversation gaps, maintaining the flow of communication, limiting English competence, expressing ideas more easily, forgetting target words, being afraid

of inaccuracy, communicating with peers, being a habit of changing languages in communication, and lacking English rules from teachers.

> *When students want to keep conversations going, they hold up the flow because of the fear of using the wrong word or mispronouncing it. (T1)*

> *I think students code-switch because of a lack of vocabulary, not knowing how to express or pronounce in English, and fear of making mistakes. Besides, students use it in groups of the same level or talk to classmates. (T2)*

> *Students have a habit of switching. There is a lack of rules for using English in class from teachers to students. (T4)*

Based on the teaching experience, the teachers presented various advantages of code-switching for teachers and students. For students, code-switching helps them absorb lessons more easily, reduces anxiety, increases motivation, and conveys ideas more effectively; meanwhile, it aids teachers in saving time and helps the class run smoothly. Although the teachers employ code-switching in their EFL classes, they consider several factors when using it, such as frequency of use, students' language proficiency, students' attitudes, L1 and L2 speech types, cultural dimensions, essential situations, and language for instruction.

> *I consider the students' abilities. (T1)*

> *I will consider the students' attitudes, nuances, and the nature of the lesson. I look at their facial expressions to see whether they understand the lesson. If they do not understand, I will code-switch. (T2)*

> *When code-switching, I will pay attention to cultural factors to find relevant words for students to understand. (T4)*
> *I consider using it when it is necessary. For classroom commands, I must use English. (T5).*

The teachers had the same idea: they always encourage students to use English more frequently than Vietnamese through diverse activities such as pair and group discussions, classroom communication, asking questions, and praise by speech or awards. However, when students need support, they may consider code-switching. Besides the benefits of code-switching, all the teachers agreed that code-switching in EFL classrooms will cause students' improper language use, overuse, and over-dependence on their mother tongue.

> *Yes. It should be used sparingly. If teachers use it too frequently, students will become accustomed to it, leading to ineffective communication in real-life contexts. (T3)*

> *Yes. Students will depend on L1, preventing them from thinking and reasoning in English. (T4)*

> *Yes. Students cannot think to understand when teachers use L2. (T5)*

Apart from these problems, the teachers acknowledged that code-switching may cause several disadvantages. For students, code-switching makes them encounter language disorders and be passive and dependent on the teacher's translation. Furthermore, it decreases the effectiveness of communication, and English thinking, makes grammatical mistakes, develops bad language

habits, and slows the development of language skills. Two out of five teachers said that using code-switching frequently is unprofessional in EFL classrooms. In line with this opinion, a teacher said that she tried her best to explain the grammatical structure in English and to limit the use of the mother tongue in the EFL classroom.

> *I tend to explain the structure in L2 as briefly as possible; however, if the class is still unclear, I will use L1 to clarify or check their understanding. (T5)*

Nevertheless, most of the teachers (4 out of 5) acknowledged that they had not provided any guidance or advice on how to control students' use of code-switching in the classroom. What is more, 80% of the teachers said that they do not feel ashamed when changing languages during teaching. And one expressed feeling ashamed of switching languages for instruction. But in general, 100% of the teachers shared the view that they should be allowed to practice code-switching as a teaching technique.

## Discussion

To investigate students' and teachers' attitudes toward code-switching and identify the functions of student and teacher code-switching, questionnaires were distributed to two groups of participants. Then, a semi-structured interview was conducted with teachers. The results revealed that the majority of participants held favorable attitudes toward code-switching in EFL classrooms, consistent with the findings of Dar et al. (2014), Fareed et al. (2016), Horasan (2014), Patmasari et al. (2022), and Selamat (2014).

*Students' Attitudes toward Using Code-Switching*

From the survey regarding students' attitudes toward code-switching in classrooms, several insights emerged. Firstly, regarding cognitive attitudes, a majority of students acknowledged the benefits of code-switching for language acquisition, aligning with Selamat (2014), who noted its positive impact on learning. Students reported that code-switching helped them focus better and minimized distractions, supporting findings by Horasan (2014) and Selamat (2014) that indicated such practices enhanced concentration and facilitated understanding of lesson content.

Code-switching also enabled effective communication among peers, as highlighted by Lee (2006, as cited in Rahmatova & Qurbonova, 2018), who noted its role in fostering participation in dialogue. Conversely, challenges arose when teachers did not employ code-switching, as students struggled to grasp new vocabulary and concepts, contradicting Rahmatova and Qurbonova's (2018) assertion that code-switching adversely affected comprehension.

On the affective side, students expressed confidence and motivation regarding code-switching and viewed it as a beneficial practice for emotional expression in language learning. This finding diverged from Fareed et al. (2016), who argued that students gained self-assurance and motivation primarily from their teachers' code-switching practices. However, Rahmatova and Qurbonova (2018) indicated that code-switching effectively communicated students' emotions, reinforcing its significance in the affective domain. Regarding behavioral intention, students exhibited neutrality toward restricting the use of their mother tongue and toward the exclusive

use of English in lessons, which contrasted with Horasan's (2014) findings advocating for code-switching in educational settings.

## Student Code-Switching's Functions

The functions of student code-switching align with Selamat's (2014) findings, which showed that students frequently switch languages when they are unable to interact with counterparts on complex topics. These observations were confirmed by Greggio and Gil's (2007) research, which supported the notion that language switching addresses proficiency challenges and enhances conversational dynamics. In contrast, Horasan (2014) noted that students also code-switched to reflect on their learning and grammatical discussions. Furthermore, students indicated that code-switching mitigated misinterpretation, which echoed Eldridge's (1996, as cited in Sert, 2005) claim that it helps control intentions and avoid conflicts. However, the study underscores a limitation by focusing solely on communication contexts, suggesting the need for future research to explore additional scenarios in which code-switching occurs.

## Teachers' Attitudes toward Using Code-Switching

From the analysis of teacher questionnaire responses, diverse perceptions regarding code-switching in teaching English were identified. Most teachers recognized its benefits for both EFL teachers and students, which was consistent with prior studies that endorse code-switching as an effective teaching strategy (Dar et al., 2014; Selamat, 2014). Regardless, many educators also voiced concerns about the drawbacks of using the first language, particularly regarding language separation, lesson quality, the availability of native instructors, and student concentration. This aligned with Selamat's (2014) findings among teachers, who held differing views on the negative effects of code-switching on language acquisition. Dar et al. (2014) echoed this sentiment, indicating that frequent code-switching may limit students' exposure to English. Furthermore, research by Patmasari et al. (2022) found that teachers often reduce code-switching to maintain an English-speaking environment. As indicated in the interview, teachers expressed ambivalence about the impact of code-switching, with some feeling embarrassed by its use and considering it unprofessional, while others reported no such feelings. Regarding their future intentions, teachers indicated planned instances for code-switching, particularly in vocabulary and grammar lessons, to clarify complex concepts. This practice was affirmed by Rahmatova and Qurbonova (2018), who suggested that code-switching is beneficial for elucidating the target language and explaining grammatical structures.

## Teacher Code-Switching's Functions

The study suggested functions of teacher code-switching in EFL classrooms, and the majority agreed. In comparison with the types of functions of teacher code-switching presented by Canagarajah (1995, as cited in Selamat, 2014), Ferguson (2003), Mattson and Burenhult (1999, as cited in Sert, 2015), the current study demonstrated that teachers used code-switching to access curriculum, manage classrooms, and build interpersonal relations. In other words, code-switching is significant for English teachers in many ways. Nevertheless, the result differed from Horasan's (2014) finding, which showed that teachers code-switched to tell jokes, whereas in this study, teachers took a neutral stance toward it.

In-depth interviews with teachers revealed that students often switch languages in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms due to their English proficiency, communication challenges, and classroom problem-solving difficulties. Although teachers acknowledged the benefits of code-switching in language teaching, as noted by Lee (2006, cited in Rahmatova & Qurbonova, 2018) and Shafi et al. (2020), they expressed concern over multiple factors when implementing it. Teachers preferred that students use English predominantly because code-switching was found to negatively affect second-language acquisition, including diminished communication quality, delayed English-language thinking, reliance on teacher translations, and the development of poor conversational habits. These concerns echoed the findings of Rahmatova and Qurbonova (2018) regarding effective communication. However, this perspective contrasts with the neutral stance reported by Pham and Nguyen (2024), who suggested that code-switching should be permitted in EFL classrooms. It was also similar to Horasan (2014) and Selamat (2014), many teachers feel that code-switching should not be entirely prohibited but rather adopted as a strategic tool in teaching. The report highlighted the lack of pedagogical guidance for teachers on managing language alternation, indicating a clear need for future attention in this area.

The study provides insights into code-switching between EFL teachers and English-major sophomores in EFL classes in Vietnam's Mekong Delta, using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. It highlights the advantages of code-switching as a strategy for second language acquisition and for enhancing educational outcomes for both educators and learners. Furthermore, the research identifies existing factors influencing code-switching practices and suggests avenues for further investigation. Ultimately, it serves as a foundation for developing effective code-switching methodologies in educational contexts, encouraging instructors to consider pedagogical strategies that facilitate optimal student engagement and learning outcomes.

## Conclusion

The study investigated the attitudes of English-majored students and EFL teachers towards code-switching in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Findings indicated a general favorability towards code-switching, viewed as a beneficial strategy for both learning and teaching EFL. Students reported that code-switching assists in effective communication, enhances their understanding of lessons, and increases their interest, motivation, and confidence in language learning. The primary function of student code-switching was identified as facilitating communication.

Teachers also acknowledged the positive aspects of code-switching, noting its role in improving students' learning experiences. However, they raised concerns about its potential disadvantages for language acquisition and their discomfort with its use in classrooms. Despite these reservations, teachers expressed a desire to incorporate code-switching as a teaching method to enhance comprehension, manage classroom dynamics, and foster interactions. The findings highlighted positive attitudes from both students and teachers across cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Nonetheless, it sparked the need for training programs that promote effective pedagogical practices involving code-switching, thereby creating a more relaxed and

productive classroom environment.

Nonetheless, the research had limitations, particularly a small sample size and a brief research period, which limited the ability to gain a deeper understanding of attitudes toward code-switching. The teacher questionnaire also lacked elements related to behavioral and emotional aspects of attitudes, leaving insights into feelings and behaviors regarding language switching unexplored. To address this, interviews with students are recommended to provide greater insight into teacher-student code-switching beyond questionnaire data. Besides, future research should broaden the stakeholder participant pool and investigate policies or training programs that help teachers use code-switching effectively in classrooms. Additionally, subsequent studies could include a broader context for students' code-switching, extend the research period, and compare code-switching frequency across contexts, such as rural versus urban EFL classes, while also examining factors influencing students' and teachers' attitudes toward code-switching. The enhanced questionnaires are suggested to capture these attitudinal dimensions more comprehensively.

## Acknowledgments

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