

Students' Perceptions on the Role of Teachers' Code-Switching in Facilitating Comprehension in EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Code-switching is a common linguistic phenomenon in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms where teachers alternate between English and the students' native language. While previous studies have discussed its general functions, there is still a need to deeply explore how senior high school students specifically perceive these switches as a tool for cognitive scaffolding and emotional support in real classroom situations. This research aims to explore students' perceptions regarding the role of teachers' code-switching in facilitating comprehension and its impact on their learning experience. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six eleventh-grade students at Senior High school selected using purposive sampling. The findings revealed that students perceive teacher code-switching as a vital cognitive tool that accelerates their understanding of complex materials and grammatical rules. Additionally, it plays a significant affective role by reducing classroom anxiety, increasing self-confidence, and building a better rapport between the teacher and students. However, students also expressed a strategic awareness that excessive use of the native language could potentially limit their exposure to English. Overall, these findings suggest that teacher code-switching is valued by students as a supportive pedagogical practice for facilitating comprehension, provided it is managed judiciously to maintain adequate exposure to the target language.

Keywords: *Code-Switching; EFL Classroom; Students' Perception; Facilitating Comprehension; Pedagogical Strategy*

Introduction

The increasingly integrated era of global education has positioned English as an international lingua franca, prompting almost all educational systems, including Indonesia, to prioritize it as a core subject with the primary goal of equipping students with adequate communication skills. However, the fact that English in Indonesia holds the status of a foreign language indicates that students' opportunities to interact with and encounter the L2 (target language) outside the classroom are very limited. This situation imposes a significant burden on educators to create an effective learning



environment and ensure that learning objectives are achieved. The greatest challenge faced by EFL instructors is bridging the gap between students' stronger proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia (L1) and the complexities of English (L2), where maximal efforts to maintain communication entirely in English often result in students failing to attain sufficient comprehension of the material taught a highly critical condition, as without understanding, the entire learning process comes to a halt.

To address this challenge practically, many educators in Indonesia have swiftly and intelligently adopted the Code-Switching strategy. Comprehension is a fundamental element in the language learning process. Without adequate understanding, the linguistic input received by students cannot be processed optimally, making it difficult to achieve learning objectives. When students fail to grasp the material presented, the learning process may be disrupted, potentially leading to decreased motivation and reduced self-confidence. Therefore, EFL teachers are required to implement instructional strategies that ensure the linguistic input provided is comprehensible to students. One widely employed strategy in the EFL context in Indonesia is code-switching. The main motives for switching codes in the classroom include students' limited proficiency, classroom management needs, and fostering solidarity with students.

Conversational code-switching refers to the fluid alternation between two distinct linguistic codes or varieties within the same interactional exchange (Gumperz, 1982, p. 59). Rather than occurring randomly, this alternation serves specific communicative purposes, such as clarifying explanations, managing interactional flow, building rapport, and scaffolding listener comprehension during complex tasks.

In a linguistic context, speakers employ code-switching and code-mixing not only to achieve stylistic variation but also as a purposeful means of expressing authority, solidarity, and affiliation with academic and cultural discourse (Fasah et al., 2025). Therefore, evaluating code-switching in a black-and-white manner as entirely positive or negative becomes less relevant. Instead, it is important to understand how, when, and for what purposes code-switching is used within specific learning contexts.

In the context of education in Indonesia, many EFL teachers employ code-switching in response to students' limited language proficiency. Several studies indicate that the main motives for teachers to engage in code-switching include students' language limitations, the need for effective classroom management, and the desire to demonstrate solidarity and closeness with students. By using students' first language in certain situations, teachers can create a more comfortable and inclusive classroom environment, enabling students to feel safer and more confident in participating in the learning process. In Indonesia, local studies have also found that teachers' use of code-switching impacts students by facilitating comprehension of the material, expressing personal identity, creating a relaxed classroom atmosphere, and fostering closer relationships with students both inside and outside the classroom (Nofiana S et al., 2023). When educators incorporate code-switching, it encourages student engagement and comprehension of directives. At times, when instruction is delivered solely in English, students with lower proficiency struggle to grasp and follow the guidance provided (Patmasari & Kamaruddin, 2022). All these research findings indicate that code-switching plays a role not only in language but also in education and social interaction. However, despite numerous studies examining the forms and functions of code-switching, the majority of research remains focused on teachers' perspectives or linguistic analyses related to code-switching patterns. While students welcomed teachers' code-switching efforts in English lessons, teachers advocated a balanced approach to language switching, particularly regarding the development of students' communication skills (Yıldız & Su Bergil, 2021).

Although various studies have examined the forms and functions of code-switching in EFL classrooms, much of the early literature primarily highlights teacher-led motivations, syntactic patterns, or functional typologies identified through researcher observations. While a growing body of recent research has begun to survey student attitudes towards code-switching (e.g., Ali, 2021), these studies predominantly rely on broad quantitative surveys that measure general satisfaction or surface-level preferences. Consequently, a critical empirical gap remains regarding how students subjectively process and evaluate these language shifts as real-time instructional tools. Specifically, little is known about how senior high school students experience teacher code-switching as a dual-functioning mechanism for cognitive scaffolding and emotional support within their immediate classroom interactions. Because students directly experience the impact of instructional strategies, investigating their nuanced accounts provides vital insight into whether code-switching genuinely enhances comprehension, fosters classroom rapport, and encourages target-language engagement. By adopting an in-depth qualitative lens, this study moves beyond general attitude measurements to explore the specific situational contexts in which students perceive teacher code-switching as beneficial or limiting to their learning process.

Several international studies have shown that students generally respond positively to teachers' use of code-switching, particularly in the context of English language learning. Students perceive code-switching as helpful in enhancing their understanding of the material and reducing confusion during the learning process. However, these studies also emphasize the importance of using code-switching in a balanced manner, particularly in relation to the development of students' communication skills in the target language. These findings indicate that, although code-switching offers benefits, its use must be carefully managed to ensure that students continue to receive sufficient exposure to English.

Therefore, understanding how students perceive the use of code-switching is crucial, as their perceptions can provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of the teaching strategies employed and assist teachers in making appropriate pedagogical decisions. With support from their first language, students feel more confident in attempting to use English without fear of making mistakes. This indicates that code-switching can function as a bridge connecting the first

language and the target language in the learning process. Nevertheless, differences in students' backgrounds, language proficiency levels, and learning objectives necessitate a deeper understanding of the context in which code-switching is employed. Not all learning situations require the use of the first language, and not all students have the same needs regarding code-switching. Therefore, studies focusing on students' perceptions in specific contexts are essential for generating pedagogical recommendations that are both relevant and contextualized.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that code-switching is a phenomenon with linguistic, pedagogical, and social dimensions. This practice is not only related to language use but also to teachers' efforts to create effective and meaningful learning experiences. In the context of EFL in Indonesia, code-switching has the potential to serve as a strategy that helps students understand the material and enhances their engagement in learning, provided it is used appropriately and systematically.

Based on these needs, this study aims to investigate students' perspectives on the implementation of code-switching by teachers during English language learning. The research investigates the extent to which code-switching is perceived as helpful in facilitating students' understanding of the material and their views regarding its effectiveness in explaining complex concepts. Furthermore, this study also aims to identify the situations in which the use of code-switching is considered appropriate or inappropriate.

The Concept of Code Switching

Code-switching (CS) refers to the mixing, by bilinguals or multilinguals of two or more languages in discourse, often with no change of interlocutor or topic. Such mixing may take place at any level of linguistic structure, but its occurrence within the confines of a single sentence, constituent, or even word has attracted most linguistic attention (Poplack, 2015). Scholars generally categorize code-switching into three primary types: inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, and tag switching.

Inter-sentential switching refers to language alternation that occurs between sentences or independent clauses. In this type, one sentence is uttered entirely in one language, followed by the next sentence in another. In EFL classrooms, inter-sentential switching is frequently used by teachers when providing re-explanations or clarifications. For instance, a teacher may present material in English and then repeat or summarize the explanation in Indonesian to ensure student comprehension. This type of code-switching is considered relatively straightforward as it does not require the integration of grammatical structures from two languages within a single sentence.

Intra-sentential switching involves language alternation occurring within a single sentence or clause. This type involves the insertion of words, phrases, or clauses from one language into the structure of the matrix language. Intra-sentential switching demands a higher level of bilingual competence, as the speaker must be able to harmonize the grammatical structures of both languages simultaneously. In EFL contexts, teachers often utilize intra-sentential switching to introduce new vocabulary, provide semantic equivalents, or emphasize specific terms to help students grasp the concepts being discussed.

Tag switching is a type of code-switching that involves the insertion of short expressions, such as interjections, discourse markers, or specific phrases from one language into an utterance primarily spoken in another. Examples of tag switching in EFL classrooms include the use of expressions like "okay," "you know," "ya," or "right?" amidst explanations in either English or Indonesian. This type is considered the simplest form of code-switching because it does not significantly affect the syntactic structure of the sentence; however, it serves a pragmatic function in maintaining interactional flow and rapport between teacher and student.

Beyond these three primary types, some researchers also classify code-switching based on its function, such as for clarification, emphasis, classroom management, and social solidarity. In EFL learning contexts, understanding the types of code-switching helps researchers and educators identify teacher language patterns and evaluate the role of language alternation in facilitating comprehension and classroom interaction. Like other contextualization cues, language alternation may provide a means for speakers to signal how utterances are to be interpreted and provide information beyond referential content (Nilep, 2006).

The Function of Code-Switching in EFL Learning

Language alternation in the context of language learning is not merely considered an official linguistic shift, but also a communicative practice with various social, pragmatic, and educational functions. Research reveals that instructors employ code-switching in the EFL learning process for several pedagogical reasons, such as checking student comprehension, managing the classroom atmosphere, providing instructions, and, most notably, providing clarification. Among these functions, clarification is the most frequently applied as it provides clarity on concepts that are difficult to explain in the target language. By facilitating explanations, translations, repetitions, comprehension checks, and classroom management, code-switching proved to be a valuable tool for navigating linguistic diversity. Code-switching not only supports comprehension but also fosters engagement, inclusivity, and effective classroom dynamics. However, balancing its use with immersive English instruction is essential to promote long-term language proficiency (Mulyani et al., 2024).

Students' Perceptions in Language Learning

Students' perceptions constitute a crucial aspect in educational research as they reflect how learners interpret their learning experiences and respond to instructional strategies implemented by teachers in the classroom. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, students' perceptions serve as an important indicator for evaluating the effectiveness of pedagogical practices employed during the instructional process. Desliyanah, (2024) explains that students' perceptions of teachers' use of code-switching are shaped through direct classroom experiences, particularly when teachers alternate between Indonesian and English in delivering instructional content.

Students' perceptions of instructional strategies play a significant role in determining the effectiveness of English learning in EFL classrooms, especially when teachers employ code-switching as a pedagogical strategy. Research indicates that the majority of students perceive the use of code-switching positively, as it helps increase their self-confidence, reduce learning anxiety, and facilitate the comprehension and expression of ideas in English. In addition to internal factors such as motivation and self-confidence, external factors, including the classroom environment and peer interaction, also influence how students interpret the use of code-switching in learning. These findings suggest that code-switching functions not only as a communication strategy but also as a pedagogical tool that supports the creation of a more inclusive, communicative, and responsive learning environment aligned with students' linguistic needs in EFL contexts (Geovani Manik et al., 2023).

Students' perceptions also play an important role in influencing their levels of motivation and participation in English language learning. In EFL classroom contexts, students who perceive the use of more than one language as a supportive instructional strategy tend to feel more comfortable and confident in participating in classroom discussions. The use of trans language strategies enables students to interact flexibly by drawing on two languages, thereby helping them overcome limitations in English proficiency while remaining actively engaged in the learning process. In addition to enhancing learning comfort, this strategy encourages greater involvement in more interactive learning activities and supports students in expanding their vocabulary and comprehending learning materials more effectively. These findings indicate that positive students' perceptions of bilingual strategies contribute to increased participation and engagement in EFL learning contexts (Sari & Syafryadin, 2024).

Students' perceptions of code-switching

Research on students' perceptions of code-switching in English language learning has received considerable attention, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Existing studies consistently suggest that students generally hold positive views toward the use of code-switching, as it helps alleviate difficulties in understanding the target language. Desliyanah, (2024), for instance, found that teachers' switches from English to Indonesian contribute to a more comfortable and enjoyable learning atmosphere, which subsequently encourages students to participate more actively in classroom communication using English.

Supporting this view, Fatsah & Purnama (2022) reported that code-switching plays a significant role in assisting students to comprehend complex learning materials, such as new vocabulary, task instructions, and challenging grammatical structures. For senior high school students, the use of the first language allows learners to relate new linguistic input to their existing knowledge, thereby facilitating a more effective and less confusing learning process. The study further emphasized that code-switching contributes to the development of learners' language abilities, particularly in terms of vocabulary mastery, speaking performance, and listening comprehension.

Similarly, Wijaya et al. (2020) demonstrated that the strategic and balanced use of code-switching can create a more conducive classroom environment and promote more active interaction between teachers and students. When teachers employ code-switching appropriately, students are better able to grasp learning objectives, which in turn enhances their confidence in participating in classroom discussions and speaking activities in English. This aspect is particularly crucial for senior high school students, who often require clear guidance and pedagogical support to build confidence in using a foreign language.

Teachers' Code-Switching in EFL Classroom

Teacher's code-switching refers to the practice in which teachers shift from the target language, English, to students' first language or vice versa during the EFL classroom instruction. In the context of foreign language learning, teachers' use of code-switching often emerges as a response to pedagogical needs and real classroom conditions. Various studies in applied linguistics indicate that teachers' code-switching is not merely a spontaneous linguistic phenomenon, but rather a teaching strategy with specific purposes. EFL teachers employ code-switching to adjust the language of instruction to students' proficiency levels, ensure that instructional messages are clearly conveyed, and maintain the flow of classroom interaction.

Murtiningsih et al., (2022) revealed five factors that influenced why EFL college teachers used CS in their teaching. The five reasons are discussing certain topics, making the teaching and learning process more effective, managing the classroom, building a social relationship with students, and encouraging students to participate more actively in the school. The second finding was about what types of CS are used by EFL college teachers when they teach in the classroom. The findings showed that teachers used inter-sentential switching more often than other types of CS. Additionally, the findings, to some extent, are able to extend the discussion of CS in EFL classrooms, particularly about the reasons and the frequent types of CS used by teachers.

Teachers practised code-switching in intra-sentential and inter-sentential types during activities such as discussing classroom management rules, teaching new vocabulary, and teaching new grammatical items. Lack of students' linguistic proficiency, maintaining classroom management, and also keeping solidarity with students were found to be the reasons for teachers' classroom code-switching practices (Bonyadi et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, the use of teachers' code-switching has also generated debate among researchers and educational practitioners. Some argue that excessive use of the first language may reduce exposure to the target language and potentially hinder students' development of English communicative skills. Therefore, many studies emphasize the importance of using code-switching selectively and in a balanced manner. Teachers' code-switching is considered effective when it is applied consciously, purposefully, and in alignment with instructional objectives, rather than serving as a primary substitute for the use of English in the EFL classroom.

Overall, previous studies suggest that teachers' code-switching is a complex and context-dependent practice in EFL instruction. Code-switching is not only related to linguistic aspects but also reflects pedagogical, managerial, and affective considerations made by teachers. Hence, a comprehensive understanding of the role of teachers' code-switching is essential to evaluate its effectiveness in supporting English language learning, particularly in facilitating students' comprehension in EFL classrooms.

Code-Switching and Comprehension

The role of code-switching in foreign language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, has increasingly attracted researchers' attention due to its potential to enhance students' comprehension of learning materials. Comprehension is a fundamental prerequisite for successful language learning, wherein students need to receive linguistic input that they can cognitively process (Krashen, 1981). In the EFL context, input delivered entirely in English is often too complex for students with developing language proficiency, prompting the selective use of the first language as a contextually responsive pedagogical strategy. Research indicates that when teachers employ code-switching, students tend to understand conceptual explanations, activity instructions, and new vocabulary more easily due to support from a language they already command (Munawaroh et al., 2022). This strategy effectively provides linguistic scaffolding that helps students process the meaning of the material without losing the main learning context.

In both face-to-face and online EFL classrooms, teachers' use of code-switching has been shown to support students' comprehension by providing reiterations, summaries, or clarifications in the first language when students encounter difficulties, without sacrificing overall English usage. Recent findings also suggest that students perceive code-switching as aiding their understanding of key lesson points and supporting classroom interaction including in virtual learning environments without significantly hindering English language acquisition (Wahyuningrum & Zahiidah, 2025). This demonstrates that code-switching is not merely a language shift but a communicative strategy capable of strengthening students' comprehension of instructional input.

Several studies further highlight that code-switching can function as a communication bridge, reducing the gap between students' language proficiency levels and the academic demands of learning. By providing linguistic backup in a language students already understand, teachers help students remain cognitively engaged with the learning material without experiencing communication breakdowns that could hinder the learning process. Additionally, code-switching can reduce students' anxiety, especially for those overwhelmed by exclusive use of the target language, creating a more inclusive learning environment that encourages active participation without fear of making mistakes.

Despite its reported benefits, the effectiveness of code-switching in supporting comprehension requires selective and strategic use. Early findings suggest that uncontrolled use of code-switching may reduce essential exposure to English, which is critical for the development of advanced language skills. Therefore, teachers need to balance short-term comprehension needs with the long-term goals of developing students' English competence. Overall, research evidence from 2020 to 2025 indicates that code-switching plays a significant role as a cognitive aid supporting students' understanding in EFL classrooms, particularly when adapted to the diverse needs of students in real learning contexts (Munawaroh et al., 2022; Wahyuningrum & Zahiidah, 2025).

2. Method

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore how eleventh-grade students perceived and interpreted their teachers' use of code-switching in English language learning within an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. A qualitative design was chosen to capture in-depth perspectives, personal experiences, and contextual interpretations grounded in real classroom practices. The study was conducted at senior high school, located in Semarang Regency, Central Java. This site was selected because English is taught as a compulsory subject and the English teacher consistently integrates code-switching during classroom instruction. Data collection took place from September to November 2025 following institutional ethical approval granted by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang (Approval Ref. No. 418/UN37.1.2/PT/2025). Formal administrative permission was secured from the school administration, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. The participants comprised six eleventh-grade students selected through purposive sampling. To ensure information-rich data and meaningful comparative insights across varying proficiency levels, the sample included two high-achieving, two moderate-achieving, and two low-achieving students, as identified by their English teacher based on prior academic

records. The sampling criterion required participants to have experienced regular teacher code-switching in EFL instruction for at least one semester. Because the participants were minors (aged 16–17), a dual-consent procedure was implemented: written informed consent was obtained from the students' parents or legal guardians, and written informed assent was secured from the students themselves.

Primary data were gathered through individual semi-structured interviews conducted directly by the lead researcher in a quiet, private conference room at the school during non-instructional hours. Each session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted primarily in Bahasa Indonesia with flexible code-switching into English or Javanese when requested to ensure that participants could express their nuances, feelings, and experiences comfortably without language barriers. An initial interview protocol was piloted with two non-participant eleventh-grade students to refine question clarity and flow. During the actual interviews, follow-up and probing questions were asked dynamically to explore emerging details, clarify ambiguous statements, and elicit concrete examples of classroom interaction. To ensure the quality and credibility of the analysis, the coding process was carried out iteratively and reflectively. Data credibility was strengthened through member checking and cross-checking of the coding results to ensure consistency between the researcher's interpretations and participants' intended meanings. This approach follows the principle of trustworthiness in qualitative research, emphasizing credibility, dependability, and confirmability through repeated verification processes. The analysis was concluded when data saturation was achieved, indicated by the absence of new information and the successful formulation of final themes that comprehensively represented students' perceptions of teachers' use of code-switching in English language learning within the EFL context.

3. Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study offer empirical insights into how eleventh-grade EFL students interpret and navigate their teacher's code-switching in classroom instruction. By examining student perspectives across different academic achievement levels, the results illustrate that code-switching serves as a dynamic, dual-purpose pedagogical resource: providing cognitive scaffolding for complex linguistic processing and maintaining affective security by lowering psychological barriers. However, the data also reveal significant nuances regarding usage boundaries, student proficiency, and multimodal instruction, highlighting that code-switching is most effective when applied as a planned, temporary scaffolding technique rather than an unmediated communicative habit.

Cognitive Role as Scaffolding for Comprehension

All participants consistently stated that teacher code-switching into Indonesian (L1) serves as a vital cognitive tool to accelerate the process of understanding instructional material (Rengur et al., 2025). AD and Sekar Ayu expressed that code-switching makes the material "absorbed faster," while RF and TY felt an instant comprehension when the teacher switched to L1 at crucial moments. This statement supports the function of code-switching as a means of curriculum access aimed at enhancing students' understanding of complex subject matter (Dandy et al., 2025).

Furthermore, students' perceptions regarding the cognitive function of code-switching extend beyond mere lexical translation. AK, AD, and FR highlighted that effective code-switching helped them recall grammatical rules and formulas even when explained in L1. AD and Sekar Ayu were both confident that the conceptual understanding gained in L1 could still be applied when producing English output. However, a divergence of views emerged concerning memory retention, where RF admitted that the detailed comprehension of grammatical rules explained in L1 tends to be easily forgotten, implying the necessity for more in-depth L2 output following L1 scaffolding. TY added that code-switching aided in recalling the appropriate English vocabulary to use when responding, which reinforces the dual role of code-switching as both a cognitive and lexical bridge (Valentino Pandiangan & Widya Pasca Tarigan, 2025).

Affective Role in Managing Anxiety

Teacher code-switching possesses a significant affective impact, perceived as an increase in self-confidence and a reduction of classroom anxiety (Hazaymeh, 2022). All participants reported a boost in self-confidence when responding after their confusion was clarified using L1 (AK, AD, TY, FR). RF specifically described code-switching as providing a "sense of relief" when full English instructions left him "confused and blank." This phenomenon is theoretically explained by Krashen, (1981).

This affective role also manifests in social interaction and classroom atmosphere. RF and FR both appreciated the use of code-switching interspersed with jokes for "brain refreshing" or as a "source of encouragement." This function aligns with the findings of Valentino Pandiangan & Widya Pasca Tarigan, (2025) and Dandy et al., (2025) that code-switching is employed to build rapport and create a sociable environment, which constitutes an effective politeness strategy. Thus, code-switching is proven to be a humanistic and contextual tool, bridging the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning (Laimena et al., 2024).

Strategic Views on Usage Boundaries and Alternatives

Despite fully supporting it, the participants demonstrated a strategic awareness regarding the potential risks and limitations of code-switching. Generally, they argued that code-switching should be used whenever students are confused. However, TY firmly stated that overuse of L1 is detrimental, as it reduces students' opportunities to acquire new vocabulary. This perception affirms the necessity of a balanced paradigm in code-switching practice, as advocated by Yıldız & Su Bergil, (2021), ensuring that the benefit of comprehension does not lead to excessive dependence that inhibits fluency (Laimena et al., 2024).

In facing difficulties, several students suggested strategic alternatives to teacher code-switching. AK preferred the teacher to repeat instructions in L2 at a slower pace, while TY chose to be proactive by directly asking the teacher about unfamiliar vocabulary. On the other hand, FR preferred the method of guessing the meaning first before the teacher provided clarification in L1. This variation in strategies indicates that although the benefits of code-switching are acknowledged, students are also aware that L2 must remain the primary input. Furthermore, the acknowledgment by the majority of participants (AD, SA, TY, RF, FR) that they still frequently engage in mental translation when producing L2 suggests that teacher code-switching, while effective, has not fully eliminated the students' internal mediation processes (Fatsah & Purnama, 2022).

This research provides strong empirical support for the role of code-switching in the affective domain. The reduced anxiety and increased self-confidence reported by all participants directly support the Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1981). By mitigating confusion and uncertainty, teachers utilize L1 to create a safe psychological climate for students (Darwis, 2024), thereby allowing the L2 input presented to be processed more easily. Even the use of code-switching for joking (RF, FR) can be viewed as a strategy to foster a friendly and inclusive atmosphere (interpersonal connection).

However, this study also highlights the dilemma between comprehension versus fluency. TY's critical view of excessive L1 use and the students' collective acknowledgment of mental translation underscore that teachers must employ code-switching strategically and sparingly. If code-switching is not managed within a balance paradigm, it has the potential to impede the development of fluent communication skills. Thus, these findings conclude that the role of code-switching must be viewed not only from its effectiveness in facilitating comprehension, but also from its judicious management so that its scaffolding function does not lead to dependency. The suggested best practice is to use code-switching effectively, such as for clarification, while still prioritizing L2 as the primary medium of instruction (Valentino Pandiangan & Widya Pasca Tarigan, 2025).

Conclusion

This study investigated how eleventh-grade EFL students perceive and interpret their teacher's use of code-switching during classroom instruction. Based on qualitative analysis of participant interviews, the findings indicate that students generally perceive teacher code-switching as a supportive instructional resource that facilitates learning in two key ways. First, participants experienced code-switching as a helpful cognitive scaffold that clarified abstract grammatical structures, unpicked low-frequency vocabulary, and prevented communication breakdowns during complex tasks. Second, participants perceived the intermittent use of their native language as an affective buffer that reduced language anxiety, fostered psychological safety, and sustained classroom engagement. However, participants across different achievement levels expressed nuanced views: while lower-achieving students relied on code-switching for basic comprehension, higher-achieving students cautioned that excessive L1 usage could foster passive learning habits and reduce necessary target language exposure. Overall, from the perspective of these participants, judicious teacher code-switching is viewed not as a linguistic deficit, but as a deliberate communicative bridge when integrated alongside other instructional supports. Several methodological limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. The study was conducted with a small, purposive sample of six eleventh-grade students at a single public senior high school in Central Java, meaning the results reflect specific contextual experiences and cannot be generalized to all EFL learners or educational settings. Furthermore, data collection relied exclusively on self-reported semi-structured interviews without incorporating direct classroom observations, teacher perspectives, or quantitative evaluations of student learning performance to verify whether perceived comprehension matched actual academic gains. Additionally, because interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and subsequently translated into English, subtle contextual nuances may have been affected during the translation process despite rigorous verification checks. Given that these findings represent student self-reports rather than direct measures of learning outcomes, practical recommendations must be approached cautiously. EFL educators might consider viewing code-switching as a flexible, multi-tiered scaffolding option rather than a default instructional mode, ensuring that non-verbal cues (such as gestures or visuals) and target language simplification are prioritized before switching codes. To build upon these qualitative insights, future research should employ mixed-methods designs that combine student and teacher interviews with systematic classroom observations and empirical measures of learning performance. Quantitative studies are particularly recommended to evaluate how controlled code-switching ratios impact actual student achievement and language development across varying proficiency levels.

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