

Strategic Use of Code-Switching as a Pedagogical Tool in L2 Context: A Survey-Based Study

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Abstract

Strategic use of code-switching in foreign language classes has been theorized as a pedagogical tool that teachers use to support learners' understanding of complex content. Around this theme, this survey-based study aimed at investigating the effects of code-switching and its functions among teachers who teach English as a foreign language (EFL). A sample of 37 male and female teachers from public schools in the Nablus Directorate of Education was recruited to complete a questionnaire administered via Google Forms. Descriptive statistics were used to identify the EFL teachers' perceptions of the functions and effects of code-switching in EFL classrooms. Results showed that EFL teachers had a positive perception of the functions and effects of code-switching, especially in supporting students' confidence, clarifying and explaining vocabulary and grammar, checking students' understanding, and providing instructions in EFL classrooms. Results also revealed that the effect domain, which included items related to developing fluency and communication, scored relatively lower than the function domain. Based on the findings, code-switching can be considered a useful pedagogical and strategic tool that should be tolerated by decision-makers and supervisors, as it supports learners' understanding of complex content without undermining target language exposure.

Keywords: code-switching, EFL, mother-tongue, target language

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Introduction

Using the first language (L1) in teaching English to other language speakers has been an issue for decades, with a great shift lately: from banning it in EFL classes to adopting it as an additional resource (Al-Marzouki & Albeyali, 2024; Benghalem & Kamińska, 2023; Fachriyah, 2017; Gulzar, 2010; Listyani & Al-Kadi, 2022; Ziadh & Ahmad, 2024). Putting it in the context of Palestine, students study English as a foreign language (EFL) from the first grade (six years old) to the twelfth grade (16-17 years old). In such an educational context, EFL teachers usually complain about students' lack of linguistic proficiency, especially when teachers decide to use English as the medium of instruction in the classroom when they teach the Palestinian curriculum English for Palestine. This curriculum was designed to follow the communicative approach that necessitates the use of the target language exclusively. Nevertheless, most teachers find themselves under special circumstances that force them to use their mother tongue, Arabic, to deliver the material. They might believe that such usage can help students comprehend the material easily and effortlessly, and that they try their best efforts to meet students' needs and desires. Other teachers may suggest that using a mixture of the two languages is considered a method by itself, since a method was defined by Rilling and Miller (2020) as a "set of beliefs about language teaching and learning and classroom teaching practices that we ascribe to and which guide us when deciding what and how to teach (p.27).

In the context of this investigation, functions of code-switching in the EFL classroom refer to the employment of the students' mother tongue (L1) by teachers to promote and achieve specific purposes such as clarifying grammar rules or vocabulary, keeping discipline, giving instructions efficiently, establishing a teacher- learner positive relationship, checking understanding, and reducing learner anxiety (Cook, 2001). Likewise, the effects of code-switching in the EFL classroom involve positive and negative consequences for students' learning. Positive effects include improving students' bilingualism, enhancing FL learning, developing conversational fluency, getting rid of uncertainty, etc. The negative effects of code-switching on students' learning may include limited target language immersion and low TL fluency (Hazaymeh, 2022; Sert, 2005). In this study, functions refer to the functions that code-switching fulfills in the EFL classroom, while effects refer to the intended or unintended outcomes or consequences of code-switching. By using the teachers' perceptions on these issues, the study refers to "a result of perceiving; a mental image, awareness of the elements of environment through physical sensation, or physical sensation interpreted in the light of experience" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Scholars and educators who believe in educational methods that emphasize the complete dependence on the target language (English in the Palestinian context), such as the Direct Method, Audio-lingual Method, and Communicative Method, have their own perspectives. They think instruction should be done in English, and students are not allowed to use their mother tongue (Arabic) in the classroom. Such educators tend to consider CS a negative practice that could slow down L2 learning. Although the communicative approach is the prevailing EFL teaching approach in Palestine, CS is a highly practiced phenomenon in EFL Palestinian classrooms. Teachers claim that they practice code-switching not because they are not proficient in L2, but because they aim to fulfil specific functions, using it as a teaching strategy to enhance L2 learning.

The main aim of this study is to determine whether EFL teachers use CS to bridge a specific gap in the teacher's linguistic or communicative competence, or to achieve specific effects and functions. That is to say, the study explores whether teachers follow strategic use of code-switching as a pedagogical tool to support EFL learners' understanding of complex content in English classes without undermining target language exposure. This study has the following objectives: (a) investigating EFL teachers' perceptions of the functions and effects of code-

switching, and (b) finding out how EFL teachers' qualifications, years of experience, and the grades they teach influence their perceptions of the functions and effects of code-switching.

Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the functions of teachers' code-switching in teaching English as a foreign language according to teachers' perceptions?
2. What are the effects of the teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms according to teachers' perceptions?
3. How do EFL teachers' qualifications, years of experience, and the grades they teach influence their perceptions of the functions and effects of code-switching?

Review of related literature

Mother-Tongue in L2 Teaching

The use of the first language (also called mother-tongue) has been examined as a threat to the learning of the target language. However, over the last two decades, it has been viewed as a resource, not a threat (Al-Kadi & Moqbel, 2024; Listyani & Al-Kadi, 2022). The replacement of the Grammar-Translation Method by alternative methods and approaches that emphasize the use of the second language rather than the mother tongue in the classroom setting has paved the way for the emergence of some approaches that either forbid the use of the mother tongue or minimize it to the least. Such an aspect was manifested in the Direct Method, the Audio-Lingual Method, and the Communicative Method. Nowadays, with the spread of Internet tools and social media in an increasingly globalized world, an intense debate over the use of the mother tongue in EFL classrooms is still found here and there. This debate has led to the emergence of a widely used term known as code-switching.

Before discussing the features and functions of code-switching, it is worth mentioning that in the traditional methods of teaching English, mainly the Grammar- Translation Method (GTM), teachers who still use it or believe in it are expected to exceed the use of code-switching (CS) since GTM allows them to use L1 as one choice for delivery and even to translate from L2 to L1 and vice versa. Concerning (CS), it was first used by Einar Haugen (1950) and Hans Vogt (1954). Cook (2016) defines CS as "going from one language to the other in mid-speech when both speakers know the same two languages" (P.182). Another definition was given by Wardhaugh & Fuller (2015) who stated that code-switching refers to the process of "alternation between two or more languages or varieties of language in the same conversation or communicative situation"(p. 103). Hence, CS is strongly associated with the first language or the mother tongue of the learner (L1).

Stimulating students to use the target language is expected to help them use the target language for learning and for meaningful communication as well. In this case, teachers might face some challenges in terms of providing realistic situations and meaningful tasks that foster students' use of the target language. Under such an argument, opponents of CS believe that EFL teachers should create a monolingual learning environment by avoiding CS or L1 use in EFL classrooms since using L1 could hinder the progress of linguistic and communicative competence (Temesgen & Hailu, 2022). Similarly, Martin (1995) indicated that the main reason for using CS is that teachers are not proficient enough. Therefore, it should be banned in EFL classes. Moreover, Cook (2001) and Lightbown (2001) pointed out that L1 use should be avoided and L2 use should be maximized so that teachers can create a monolingual language atmosphere, keep the two languages separate, and prevent negative transfer from L1. In line with this, Sridhar (1996) argued that some pedagogy practitioners and theoreticians consider

CS as a negative factor in the EFL classroom, as it indicates carelessness in the brain and a lack of linguistic and/or communicative competence.

On the other hand, some educators argue that learners' first language can help these learners in learning the foreign /second language and that dual language programs are successful in building literacy skills and practices in both languages (Rilling & Miller, (2020). In this regard, Cloud et al. (2009) maintained that preliminary literacy in the first / home language is expected to aid students in learning and mastering the foreign language, particularly in the initial phases of school education. Rilling and Miller (2020) reiterate that biliteracy could include codeswitching, or change-ups between English and Arabic, which is not considered a bad action. Other L1 advocates argue that L1 should not be discouraged, as it can be used to promote target language learning (Shah et al., 2024).

By the same token, proponents of CS think that L1 use should be allowed as it can maximize L2 learning. Paradowski (2008) stated that the role of L1 should be steered and emphasized to promote L2 learning. According to Cook (2016), L2-only EFL classes seem less authentic because learners pretend to be L1 native speakers and do not act as real L2 speakers. In contrast to L1 acquisition, in the L2 learning case, learners have a second language that can be used to facilitate L2 learning if it is used in a balanced way. The second argument, Cook's study (1991) disproved, is the hypothesis that L1 and L2 should be learned independently and separately. He pointed out that the two languages cannot be separated, as they are stored in the same area of the brain. Cook also found that a good command of L2 can be attributed to L1 command, since bilingual learners possess unique metalinguistic knowledge.

Studies on Code-Switching in EFL Contexts

As mentioned previously, the Palestinian curriculum English for Palestine largely depends on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), where the goal of teaching English is to develop students' proficiency and enable them to use it effectively for communication (Najjar et al., 2015, p.7). CLT, according to Cook (2001), proposes that productive L2 learning is based on the amount of real communication conducted in L2. Hence, in a communicative class, where authentic communication is the focus, there is little space left for L1. As a result, the majority of EFL decision-makers in Palestine support the monolingual approach, which views CS as a non-productive tool, and call for L1 avoidance in the EFL classroom.

Over the past decades, a substantial body of research has examined the functions of code-switching (CS) in EFL classrooms across different contexts. Despite this growing interest, studies focusing on the Palestinian EFL context remain limited, indicating a clear gap in context-specific research. Existing studies consistently demonstrate that CS serves multiple pedagogical and affective functions, though its perceived value varies across contexts, participants, and instructional goals.

Empirical evidence across studies highlights the multifunctional nature of CS. For instance, Al-Marzouki and Albeyali (2024) and Ziadh and Ahmad (2024) show that CS is widely used to support comprehension, emphasize key concepts, and enhance engagement. Similarly, studies such as Fachriyah (2017) and Gulzar (2010) provide detailed classifications of CS functions, ranging from simplification and repetition to classroom management and social interaction. These findings collectively suggest that CS is not a random linguistic behavior but a strategic instructional tool that supports both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

At the same time, several studies reveal that contextual and individual variables significantly influence the frequency and perception of CS. Benghalem and Kamińska (2023) emphasized the role of linguistic environment and professional experience, showing that CS is more prevalent in multilingual settings and among experienced teachers. Likewise, Dykhanova (2015) identified factors such as mother tongue, gender, and academic level as influencing attitudes toward CS.

This indicates that CS practices are shaped not only by pedagogical intentions but also by sociolinguistic and institutional contexts.

A recurring pattern across literature is the relationship between CS and learners' language proficiency. Many studies (e.g., Tabassum et al., 2020; Mahdi & Almalki, 2019; Hussein et al., 2020) show that both teachers and students rely on CS to compensate for limited proficiency, facilitate understanding, and sustain communication. This suggests that CS serves as a scaffolding mechanism, enabling learners to access content while gradually developing their target-language competence. However, this reliance also raises concerns about overdependence, as indicated in studies like Binmahboob (2020), where teachers advocate for restricted and controlled use of CS.

In addition to pedagogical functions, the effective and social roles of CS are strongly emphasized. Studies such as Hazaymeh (2022), Patmasari and Kamaruddin (2022), and Temesgen and Hailu (2022) highlight how CS contributes to building rapport, reducing anxiety, and maintaining classroom interaction. These findings underscore the importance of CS in creating a supportive learning environment, particularly in contexts where students may struggle with confidence in using the target language.

Despite the generally positive perceptions, the literature also reflects a degree of tension regarding the legitimacy of CS in EFL instruction. While many teachers acknowledge its practical benefits, some (e.g., Adder & Bagui, 2020; Binmahboob, 2020) view it as a necessary but less desirable practice, revealing an ongoing debate between maintaining target language exposure and addressing learners' immediate needs. This contradiction highlights the lack of clear pedagogical guidelines governing the use of CS.

In the Palestinian context, Mkahal (2016) provides one of the few localized insights, confirming that CS fulfills essential pedagogical and communicative functions. However, the scarcity of such studies limits the ability to generalize findings or develop context-specific frameworks. This reinforces the need for further research that takes into account the unique linguistic, cultural, and educational characteristics of Palestinian EFL classrooms.

In conclusion, the reviewed literature demonstrates that code-switching is a complex and context-dependent phenomenon that plays a significant role in facilitating comprehension, supporting interaction, and enhancing classroom management. While its effectiveness is widely recognized, its use remains influenced by contextual variables and differing pedagogical beliefs. Therefore, rather than being viewed as either wholly beneficial or detrimental, CS should be approached as a strategic teaching practice that requires careful, context-sensitive integration. Future research, particularly in underexplored contexts such as Palestine, is essential to develop clearer guidelines that balance pedagogical effectiveness with language learning objectives.

Method

This is a survey-based study of the strategic use of code-switching as a pedagogical tool that teachers resort to support EFL learners' understanding of complex content in English classes in the context of Palestine. The study population included male and female English language teachers in Nablus District schools (393 male and female teachers) based on the data obtained from the Directorate of Education in Nablus during the second semester (2024-2025). Table 1 presents the distribution, numbers, and percentages of the sample, which was selected randomly and included (16) male and (21) female EFL teachers who teach English Language in the public schools in the Nablus District.

Table 1. Distribution of the sample according to the gender, academic qualification, and year of experience variables

Variables	Level	No.	Percentage
Gender	Male	16	43.2%
	Female	21	56.8%
	Total	37	100%
Academic qualification	Diploma	0	0%
	B. A	30	81.1%
	M.A	7	18.9%
	Total	37	100%
Years of experience	Less than 5 years	2	5.4%
	5-10 years	6	16.2%
	More than 10 years	29	78.4%
	Total	37	100%
Grades	1-6	7	18.9%
	7-9	2	5.4%
	10-12	18	48.6%
	1-9	1	2.7%
	7-12	3	8.1%
	Total	37	100%

Instrument

The researcher employed a 20-item questionnaire to gather data on EFL teachers' perceptions of the functions and effects of their use of code-switching in EFL classes. The items are classified into two domains: the functions domain and the effects domain (10 items each). All these items were adapted from Hymes (1962), Gulzar (2010), Sert (2005), Chonge (2019), Fachriyah (2017), and Lee (2016) studies. To confirm the questionnaire's validity, it was reviewed by three ELT experts from different universities in Palestine. They confirmed its validity and suggested that some changes were made. This procedure aimed to ensure that the items in the questionnaire were clear and appropriate for capturing teachers' perceptions of the functions and effects of their code-switching. The researcher used Cronbach's Alpha test to identify the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire, which was 0.944. The questionnaire was constructed online using Google Forms to facilitate the collection of participants' responses. Then, the researchers sent the questionnaire link to the EFL teachers in Nablus District via WhatsApp groups, and 37 responded to the items. To analyze the data collected, the researchers employed SPSS. Means, standard deviations, and percentages were calculated to assess the EFL teachers' perceptions of the function and attitudes of their code-switching.

Results

RQ1: What are the functions of the teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms according to teachers' perceptions?

Table 2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of responses for each question in the questionnaire. To interpret the results, a five-point scale was used. The researchers employed the following scale to identify the teachers' perceptions of the functions and attitudes of their code-switching: 4 and more very high, 3.5 - 3.99 high, 3- 3.49 moderate, 2.5 - 2.99 low, and below 2.5 is very low.

Table 2a. Means, standard deviation, and degree of evaluation for each question and each domain.

	Item	Mean	SD	Degree
1	I use code-switching to check students' understanding.	3.73	.962	High
2	I use code-switching to give instructions.	3.62	1.037	High
3	I use code-switching to give feedback.	3.43	1.068	Moderate
4	I use code-switching to boost students' interaction in the classroom.	3.46	1.192	Moderate
5	I use code-switching to help students feel more confident and comfortable.	3.81	.995	High
6	I use code-switching to clarify and explain vocabulary.	3.78	1.031	High
7	I use code-switching to clarify and explain grammar.	3.73	1.045	High
8	I use code-switching for class discussions of students' tasks, assignments, tests, and quizzes.	3.49	1.096	Moderate
9	I use code-switching to create a sense of belonging among students.	3.46	1.043	Moderate
10	I use code-switching for class management.	3.32	1.180	Moderate
Total of the Function Domain		3.58	0.770	High

Table 2b. Means, standard deviation, and degree of evaluation for each question and domain

	Code-switching promotes bilingualism among students.	3.32	1.056	Moderate
	It facilitates foreign language learning.	3.86	.887	High
	It facilitates foreign language teaching.	3.73	.990	High
	It saves time in the EFL classroom.	3.54	1.145	High
	It helps students remove doubts and uncertainty about the subject matter.	3.73	1.097	High
	It promotes faster target language development and understanding.	3.49	1.216	Moderate
	It develops conversational fluency.	3.03	1.343	Moderate
	It strengthens students' English communication skills.	3.14	1.357	Moderate
	It helps students with language deficiencies fill gaps in their language development.	3.35	1.060	Moderate
	It strengthens students' English.	3.14	1.206	Moderate
	Total of the Effect Domain	3.43	0.771	Moderate

Table 2 presents the analysis of the teachers' responses to the items in the function domain. It indicates that the total mean score of the teachers' perceptions of the functions that CS serves was 3.58, which is considered high based on the scale. The functions that received the highest means were boosting students' confidence, clarifying and explaining vocabulary, checking students' understanding, clarifying and explaining grammar, and giving instructions, with mean scores of 3.81, 3.78, 3.73, 3.73, and 3.62, respectively. However, the functions that received the lowest mean scores were maintaining class management, giving feedback, boosting students' interaction, improving students' affiliation among students, and discussing students' tasks, with the mean scores of 3.32, 3.43, 3.46, 3.46, and 3.49, respectively.

RQ2: What are the effects of teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms according to teachers' perceptions?

The analysis of the teachers' responses in the effect domain is displayed in the table. It notes that the total mean score for teachers' perceptions of the effects of CS was 3.43, which is considered moderate based on the study's rubrics. The effects that received the highest means included: facilitating foreign language learning, facilitating foreign language teaching, reducing uncertainty about the subject matter, and saving time in the EFL classroom, with mean scores of 3.86, 3.73, 3.73, 3.73, 3.73, and 3.54, respectively. However, the effects that yielded the lowest mean scores were developing conversational fluency, strengthening students' communicative skills in English, strengthening students' English, promoting bilingualism among students, helping students with language deficiency fill in the gaps in their language development, promoting faster target language development and understanding, with mean scores of 3.03, 3.14, 3.14, 3.32, 3.35, 3.49, respectively. Regarding the correlation between the function domain and the effect domain, Pearson's correlation was used to find the relationship between the function domain and the effect domain, as presented in Table 3. The results indicate a strong, positive, and significant correlation, $r = 0.826$, $p = [0.001]$. This indicates that teachers who have a positive perception of the functions of CS also tend to have a positive perception of its effects in the EFL classroom.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation between the function domain and the effect domain

Functions Domain	Pearson Correlation	1	.826**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	37	37
Effects Domain	Pearson Correlation	.826**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	37	37

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

RQ3: How do EFL teachers' qualifications, years of experience, and the grades they teach influence their perceptions of the functions and effects of code-switching?

Table 4 presents the differences in the mean scores and the p-value of the EFL teachers' perceptions of the functions and effects due to the variables of qualification, years of experience, and the grades they teach. As presented in Table 4, the mean score for teachers holding a B.A. degree regarding their perceptions of the functions and effects of CS was 3.50, while the mean score of teachers holding an M.A. degree was 3.54. The p-value was 0.897, which is more than the significance level ($p \leq 0.05$). Consequently, it can be concluded that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the EFL teachers' perceptions of the functions and effects of CS due to their qualifications. In addition, the mean score of teachers with less than 5 years of experience was 3.27, whereas the mean scores of those with 5-10 years of experience and those with more than 10 years of experience were 3.11 and 3.60, respectively. The p-value was 0.345, which is more than the significance level ($p \leq 0.05$). Therefore, it can be decided that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the EFL teachers' perceptions of the functions and effects of CS due to teachers' years of experience.

Table 4. Overall Mean score and p-value according to participants' characteristics

Variables	No.	Mean Score		St.D	p-value
Qualification	B.A	30	3.50	0.76	0.897
	M.A	7	3.54	0.87	
Years of experience	Less than 5 years	2	3.27	1.9	0.345
	5-10 years	6	3.11	0.71	
	More than 10 years	29	3.6	0.7	
Grades	1-6	7	3.94	0.83	0.453
	7-9	8	3.23	0.84	
	10-12	18	3.49	0.655	
	1-9	1	3.9	-	
	7-12	3	3.23	1.19	

** significant at ($p \leq 0.05$).

Furthermore, the table shows that the mean score for the teachers who teach grades 1-6 was 3.94; teachers of grades 7-9 had a mean score of 3.23; those teaching grades 10-12 scored 3.49; those who teach grades 1-9 had a mean score of 3.9; and teachers of grades 7-12 had a mean score of 3.23. The p-value was 3.51, which is more than the significance level ($p \leq 0.05$). Therefore, it can be determined that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the EFL teachers' perceptions of the functions and effects of CS due to the grades they teach.

Discussion

As for TQ1, the findings indicate that the total mean score of the teachers' perceptions of the functions that code-switching serves was 3.58. This result indicates that code-switching is not a random practice but rather an intentional teaching tool used strategically and consciously by teachers to perform specific functions in EFL classes, specifically those functions related to enhancing students' confidence, clarifying vocabulary and grammar, checking understanding, and giving instructions. On the other hand, the relatively low scores of the functions related to class management, giving feedback, scaffolding students' interaction, and enhancing the sense of belonging could imply that teachers prefer to conduct these functions in English to maximize students' immersion in English and improve their communicative competence, which is the ultimate goal of EFL instruction. These results align with the results of Al-Marzouki and Albeyali (2024), Ziadh and Ahmad (2024), Hazaymeh (2022), Zainil and Arsyad (2021), Al-Farra (2020), Temesgen and Hailu (2022), Adder & Bagui (2020), Hussein et al. (2020), Tabassum et al. (2020), Fachriyah (2017), and Gulzar (2010), who all found that CS in English Language classes serves various pedagogical functions. However, the results related to the first question do not align with those of Almagableh and Yunus (2022), who found that CS is used to avoid confusion and irrelevant topics. The findings also do not align with the results of Patmasari and Kamaruddin (2022), who found that CS is mainly used to enhance communication; Binmahboob (2020), who concluded that CS has a very limited role in EFL classes; and Mahdi and Almalki (2019), who discovered that teachers primarily used code-switching to assist students with limited proficiency.

Corresponding to RQ2, the findings reveal that the total mean score of the teachers' perceptions of the effects was 3.43. In addition, the results indicate that facilitating foreign language learning had the highest scores, while items related to enhancing communication and improving fluency received the lowest scores. This can be attributed to the teachers' underlying belief that CS has a limited role in improving communicative competence and developing their fluency. Consequently, CS should be used judiciously. These findings coincide with those of Hazaymeh (2022), Zainil and Arsyad (2021), Temesgen and Hailu (2022), Ziadh and Ahmad (2024), Adder & Bagui (2020), Hussein et al. (2020), Fachriyah (2017), and Gulzar (2010), who found that CS had crucial effects on students' learning strategies and a restricted effect on their communicative skills. The results also align with Binmahboob's (2020) findings, who found that CS has a limited role in communicative EFL classes. However, these results differ from those of Patmasari and Kamaruddin (2022), who found that CS is primarily employed to scaffold students' communicative competence, and Mahdi and Almalki (2019), who found that most teachers had negative attitudes toward using code-switching in English Language classrooms.

As for the third RQ, the findings indicate that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the EFL teachers' perceptions of the functions and effects of code-switching due to their qualification, years of experience, or the grades they teach. This means that these variables do not influence teachers' perceptions of the functions and effects of CS in EFL classrooms. It is worth noting that the mean score of teachers who teach low levels (grades 1-6) was 3.94, while those who teach higher levels received lower mean scores. This implies that teachers believe that CS could be more beneficial in lower grades due to their limited linguistic and communicative competencies, while in higher grades, the role of L1 should be restricted as it negatively affects the students' immersion in the target language. This result aligns with the results of Rabab'ah and Al-Yasin (2017), who found that the kinds of code-switching differ depending on their proficiency level.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that teachers with more than ten years of experience received a higher mean score than those with 5-10 years and less than five years of experience. This suggests that inexperienced teachers do not utilize CS due to their limited proficiency, whereas more experienced teachers employ it because they believe in its role in serving specific pedagogical functions. These results align with the findings of Benghalem and Kamińska (2023), who suggested that a positive relationship exists between code-switching and professional experience.

Conclusion

This study examined Palestinian teachers' perceptions of the functions and effects of code-switching in EFL classrooms. The results revealed that EFL teachers generally have a positive perception of the functions and effects of code-switching, specifically supporting students' confidence, clarifying and explaining vocabulary and grammar, checking students' understanding, and giving instructions. However, the functions and effects related to improving language proficiency and communicative skills had lower mean scores. The analysis of the data also revealed that teachers with more teaching experience valued CS more positively compared to those with less experience. This suggests that experienced teachers are qualified to value and understand the valuable role of CS in the EFL classroom. The findings also indicated that teachers at lower levels tend to have more positive perceptions of code-switching, as they have less language proficiency. These findings suggest that code-switching can be a valuable pedagogical tool when used strategically and judiciously, as it can scaffold students' comprehension of complex content, enhance instructional clarity, facilitate learning, and encourage students' engagement.

Based on the results, the researchers recommend that further research be conducted to explore the functions and effects of code-switching. They emphasize that supervisors should recognize code-switching as a valuable pedagogical tool and support teachers in using it strategically to enhance learning. Additionally, decision makers should permit code-switching as a teaching practice, provided it is used wisely to achieve specific educational goals. Finally, there should be training courses for both pre-service and in-service educators that focus on the strategic use of code-switching and its pedagogical value, along with professional development opportunities to help teachers effectively apply these strategies in their classrooms.

This study is significant for teachers and policymakers who are uncertain about the importance of employing CS as a teaching tool in foreign language classes, as it can help them make informed decisions and establish clear criteria for the judicious use of CS in English classes. In addition, the results can play an important role in developing the appreciation of teachers, curriculum designers, and decision-makers of the value, functions, and effects of CS. Despite the significance, the study is restricted to investigating the EFL teachers' perceptions of the functions of code-switching during the scholastic year 2024/2025. It is limited to the population in the Nablus district. This may limit the generalizability of the study's findings outside its population. However, it can motivate other researchers to conduct further experimental studies that measure the pedagogical benefits of CS on EFL teaching and learning.

Disclosure Statement

We (both authors of this paper) hereby declare that research ethics and citation principles have been considered in all stages of this paper. I take full responsibility for the content of the paper in case of a dispute. I confirm that the manuscript has been created by the author(s) and not an AI tool/Large Language Model (LLM).

The first author contributed 70% and the second author contributed 30% to this paper.

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