



PRIMARY TEACHERS' CODE-SWITCHING IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract:

Teaching English has never been easy especially for countries where English is a foreign language. It becomes more challenging if the learners are primary students because their English proficiency is low. Therefore, primary teachers are required to have appropriate teaching methods for them. Code-switching is considered one of teaching methods which is adopted by primary teachers frequently in the classroom. It not only assists teachers in teaching but also in classroom management effectively. Thus, research is conducted to find out functions of CS as well as to the reasons why primary English teachers use it in their classroom. This research is qualitative research. The participants of this study are English teachers who are teaching at primary schools in the Mekong Delta. The instruments of this study were observation, audio-recording, and interview. The results showed that CS was actually used a lot by primary English teachers in their classroom. However, code-switching serve their teaching most. Teachers also admitted that it provided great support for them in teaching such as helping students understand the lesson better and saving time. This study is expected to benefit EFL teachers, especially those who are teaching English for primary schools in general and for young learners in particular. Furthermore, it enables primary EFL teachers to have insights into the functions of CS as well as when it is used in teaching practices. In addition, primary EFL teachers are expected to have critical thinking of the CS and make suitable choices in applying CS effectively.

Keywords: English, code-switching, mother tongue, EFL classrooms, function, reason

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1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Code-switching (CS) is an available resource for bilingual speakers and hearers in the foreign language classroom context. It is more suitable to use CS as a discourse strategy when teachers and learners have homogeneous ethnic and linguistics backgrounds (Qian, Tian, & Wang, 2009). In addition, CS is a type of teaching and learning strategy that affects the learning of content knowledge as well as the target language (Kim, 2015).

In the current trend of globalization and modernization, training global citizens contributes to each country's development, so top priority must be given to education. However, to be competitive and successful in international cooperation and labor market, language proficiency is a compulsory condition that global citizens must develop for themselves. As a result, English as an international language is considered a common means that helps the interaction among nations to be more convenient. Towards nations where English is a foreign language, learning it is not always easy. English learners need to be approached with suitable learning methods and strategies.

Therefore, EFL teacher would play an important role in selecting effective teaching methods for each level of students in order to help their English learning process succeed. Each level has its own difficulties. However, teaching young learners is considered one of the challenges for EFL teachers. Learners at this level have low proficiency in English. Therefore, code-switching is often observed to be relied on very often by teachers in primary classrooms. Coming from the researcher's curiosity about CS, the controversy over its use in language classrooms, the need to understand what language teachers use CS for and why they code switch in their teaching, the current study was conducted.

1.2 Research aims and research questions

The study aims to find out (1) the functions of primary teachers' code-switching and (2) the reasons why they do so. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out the answers for the two following research questions:

- 1) What functions does EFL primary school teachers' code-switching serve?
- 2) Why do EFL primary school teachers code switch?

1.3 Significance of the study

This study is to explore primary teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms and why it is used. It is expected to benefit EFL teachers, especially those who are teaching English for primary schools in general and for young learners in particular. This study enables primary EFL teachers to have insights into the functions of CS as well as when it is used in teaching practices. In addition, primary EFL teachers are expected to have critical thinking of the CS and make suitable choices in applying CS effectively.

This thesis is also expected to provide a useful reference that will support further, future research on related topics.

1.4 Organization of the research

This research is a combination of five chapters:

Chapter one, *Introduction*, includes the rationale of the study; research aims research questions as well as the organization of the research.

Chapter two, *Literature review*, reviews relevant literature and key research studies on code-switching in language teaching.

Chapter three, *Methodology*, describes the research design, the participants, the instruments of the research and the data collection, data analysis procedure.

Chapter four, *Findings and Discussions*, presents the findings and discussions from the data collected by observation, audio-recording and interview.

Chapter five, *Conclusions and Implications*, sums up the findings, presents implications and the limitation of the study. The recommendations for future studies are also mentioned in this chapter

2. Literature review

This chapter presents the definition of key terms in the thesis, the role of teacher language/discourse in language classroom, common functions of teacher discourse in language classroom, and teacher choice of language in English language classroom

2.1. Defining key terms

2.1.1 Code-switching (CS)

Code-switching is defined as the term for the contact of different languages in a conversation (Schmidt, 2014). It can be said that the union of at least two (lexically-encoded) grammars is the criteria in code-switching (MacSwan, 2014). Besides, Milroy, Muysken, and Muysken (1995) define code-switching as the substitute usage by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation. Also, code-switching exposes a functional use of two languages which has social nature and typical of a certain group of bilinguals who have acquired both languages in a complex bilingual context (Penfield & Ornstein-Galicia, 1985). Moreover, CS is mentioned as the exchanging between two languages codes among those who contribute specific codes in communication (Moghadam, Samad, & Shahraki, 2012). Gardner-Chloros (2009) reckons that code-switching was “*informative about language at a number of different levels.*”

2.1.2. Mother tongue (L1)

Mother tongue is considered as native language that people approach from their birth at their home country. Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) notes that mother tongue consists of the term “mother”, so it can be considered as the language that mother speaks.

2.1.3. Teacher language / teacher discourse

Before conducting the definition of teacher discourse, the term “discourse” should be clarified first. Walsh (2013) states that discourse is spoken or written texts that are produced in specific context or for a particular purpose. Besides, Cook (1989) says that

the kind of language which is used to communicate something and is felt to be coherent (and may, or may not, happen to correspond to a correct or a series of correct sentences) is called discourse-language in use, for communication.

2.1.4. Primary English language teacher (PELT)

Primary English language teachers are those who are working in the primary education system. They directly teach English for students who are studying in primary education system. It could be defined that they are teachers who do primary English language teaching which is a unique branch of ELT as it involves *“both the teaching of children and beginners”* (Glaser, 2018). In Vietnamese education system, primary students start to learn English from grade 3 to grade 5. Therefore primary English language teachers are considered who instruct *“pupils in the “3Rs”, and prepare them for their secondary education”* (Newton, 2002, p.12)

2.2 The role of teacher language/discourse in language classroom

2.2.1. The role of teacher language in teaching

Different roles of teacher talk have been considered by scholars. It is proven useful for learners because it gives them a special opportunity to get more questions and answers, learning and other activities (Rezaee & Farahian, 2012). It is considered a means of communication in teaching. Teachers can apply many different ways to communicate with students in the classrooms such as through speaking, body language, gestures, and the written word, and so on. Effective communication can support instructor have a "presence" in the classroom and motivate learners and facilitates learning (Duta, Panisoara, & Panisoara, 2015).

2.3. Common functions of teacher discourse in language classroom

2.2.2. The role of teacher language in language classroom

The language that teachers use in language classroom is more than just a means for communication. It is also the content as it provides meaningful comprehensible input for language learners. In fact, the language used by teachers in language classrooms is employed as language knowledge's input source (Irmayani & Rachmajanti, 2017).

2.3.1. Interpersonal communication function

This is when the teacher uses language to create a good atmosphere in the classroom, bonding well with the students, showing care and support. Examples of this function is when the teacher greets students and asks how they are, or asking about their family and friends and their life. This function is important but it often takes up a small part in the volume of teacher classroom discourse.

2.3.2. Classroom management function

Classroom management function is often indicated in teacher discourse of checking comprehension, checking if students need help/support/further explanation, directing students to the task, praising students. It is important to remember that for primary

school students, classroom management and its discourse is more important than that for classes of students of the older age group. As primary school students are young learners who very often have short attention span and require constant management for effective teaching and learning to take place.

2.3.3. Pedagogical function

For the purpose of facilitating comprehension and assist the learning process, teachers employ a different range of linguistic resources (Walsh, 2013). Besides, Weizheng (2019) remarks that in EFL classrooms, teachers could change their speech patterns to ensure better understanding and information exchange. Interpretability is used by speakers to change the words and expression to make them understand easily. Pedagogical or teaching function in teacher discourse is often associated with explaining new words, new structures/concepts, providing examples, eliciting student answers, checking comprehension,...

2.4. Teacher choice of language in English language classroom

2.4.1. The English-only approach

English-only (EO) approach is one of the common one that teachers apply in their teaching process. Littlewood and Yu's (2011) study remark that using the target language (TL) is not only as "target" to be learnt in the classroom but also for other purposes, learners are going to perceive it as a useful tool for communication and arise more positive motivation to learn it.

2.4.2. The controversial role of mother tongue in language classroom

L1 has its own benefits in supporting L2 teaching and learning. It can be used as a tool to help teaching in comparing and contrasting between L1 and L2 while teaching different features of L1 and target language. Therefore, it is a useful resource to help teachers identify the similar components between L1 and L2. Kayaoğlu (2012) finds out the importance of L1 in foreign language teaching. The author states that L1 can support to manage classroom. Besides, it helps to warm up the relationship between students and teachers. L1 provides teacher some advantages as simplification of difficult themes.

2.4.3. Teacher's code-switching (CS) in EFL classrooms

Code-switching is an available resource for bilingual speakers and hearers in the foreign language classroom context.. CS is as a tool or strategy that supports EFL teachers in teaching. Obaidullah (2016) concludes in his study that both teachers and students agree with that CS helps understand the lesson content better and facilitates learning. Furthermore, CS meets many social and academic functions in the classroom as clarify subject content, instructions, explaining, and confirming assistance (Memon, Altaf, & Khuwaja, 2016). Ahmad and Jusoff's (2009) findings confirm that the participants in their study had positive perception of teachers' CS. They pointed out that CS supported the learners with understanding the instructions in class, meaning of words, and helped students improve their English. Besides, teachers should be reminded that CS is a

strategy or measure to make sure transfer of understandable input from the teachers to the students. Systematic use of CS to assist certain functions can ensure learning success. Moreover, switching to mother tongue in EFL classrooms, whether started by the teachers or the learners, is possible to rouse the degree of attention towards discourse content and/or form, and will usually consist of feed-back, as well as open a new chain of negotiation and production in L2 (Moore, 2002).

2.4.4. Possible reasons for teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms

Switching between target language and L1 is one of the teaching strategies in language classrooms. Thus, it is needed to have certain reasons in order to apply it effectively. Çavuşoğlu and Bostanci (2013) argue that the reasons for making use of code-switching in language classrooms of the teachers could be explaining meaning, saving time in teaching and motivating learners. The authors state that when teachers encourage between languages by consolidating the practice of CS, learners' understanding, which leads to participation and motivation, is enhanced. Besides, Fareed, Humayun, and Akhtar (2016) find out that there are many reasons for switching code in language classroom. They do code-switch to serve social and academic purposes. CS is used as a tool or strategy to help learners understand difficult terms, to provide examples from mother tongue due to the absence of terminology in L2 or to make the idea clear, emphasize certain points and to give instruction. When they recognize it is the need of the students and the context using L1 becomes essential, so CS is objective-based and context based.

3. Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research design and participants, instruments and procedure.

3.1. Research design

For the purpose of answering the research questions in chapter 1 the research carried out at primary schools in Mekong delta. The participants are English language teachers at primary schools. To investigate primary teachers' code switching in detail, a range of qualitative data including observation, audio-recording and interview will be employed in this study.

3.2 Participants

The participants of this study were 7 primary teachers at primary schools in Mekong delta. Their ages range from 30 to 36 years old. They have been teaching English for primary students for 8-15 years. Five teachers have BA degrees and teaching certificates and two teachers have English Teacher education degrees. They take training course every year. The participants all speak English as a foreign language and share the same mother tongue, i.e. Vietnamese. They all work in rural area. Their students are from grade 3 to 5. They teach from 13 to 14 hours a week. There are at least 21 students in every class. The participants are enthusiastic and honest to support the researcher.

3.3 Research instruments

3.3.1 Classroom observation and audio-recording

Classroom observation is the good way to approach practical context. (Burns, 1999) is of the opinion that *"the researcher becomes a member of the context and participates in its culture and activities"* (p.82). The data and information will be collected authentically. The observation checklist will include in information of the class such as teacher's name, topic, length of lesson, ect. The main part of the observation form is the checklist of code-switching's functions in EFL classrooms. There is extra note part where the observer can write down their comments or special situations appeared during the process of observation.

Video and audio-recording are the two tools that support the qualitative researches very well. However, only audio-recording was selected because the participants and primary students were not familiar with being in front of the camera. Therefore, using audio-recording could keep things happen naturally in the classrooms.

3.3.3 Interview

To obtain insightfully into teachers' opinion about using code-switching in English classrooms, the interviews were conducted. Five main questions and some more auxiliary questions during the interview happen. The first question focused on exploiting if the teachers switch to mother tongue when teaching English in their classrooms or not. The next question was their opinion about the role of CS in English teaching. Next, two following questions focused on what situations the teachers do CS and why they do so. Finally, the participants would express their opinion about the influence of CS on English learning. In addition, auxiliary questions would collect some more information about using CS of the participant such as at which grades CS is used more, which functions of CS that they often use in their classrooms, their CS in the future, ect.

3.4 Data collection procedure

The process of collecting data lasted within 4 weeks in May. To acquire the authentic and reliable data for the study, the observations and audio-recording were administered first because the authenticity of what happen in the classrooms could be ensured. It took 2 weeks to observe and record two actual primary classes. The audio-recording data were collected together with observation time. Due to the different available time of the participants, so the interview was conducted in within 2 weeks after finishing the observations.

4. Result and discussions

4.1 Result of the classroom observation

From the data collected from observation and audio-recording, three main functions of primary teachers' CS are found being interpersonal communication functions, teaching function and classroom management function. In interpersonal communication function, CS is to only support greeting purpose. The result reaches a conclusion that the

participants do not apply CS for interpersonal communication need. The table below presents the result.

Table 4.1: Interpersonal communication function

Functions	T(A)	T(B)	T(C)	T(D)	T(E)	T(F)	T(G)
Greeting						✓	
Chatting							
Building solidarity and intimate relationship							
Warming up							

In contrast, the two rest functions teaching and classroom management function of CS is found clearer. Particularly, in teaching function, the purposes for doing CS are giving classroom instruction, translating / providing basic meaning of the new vocabulary, providing extended explanation of the new vocabulary, explaining difficult ideas, providing examples, providing prompts while eliciting students to answer, explaining grammatical structure, reviewing the lesson and asking for students' confirmation. Besides, checking comprehension, checking if students need help/support/further explanation, directing students to the task and praising students are cases that CS supports in classroom management function. However, it can be found that classroom instruction, translating / providing basic meaning of the new vocabulary and explaining difficult ideas are used more than others by primary teachers. They belong to teaching function. The table below shows the result.

Table 4.2: Pedagogical/teaching function

Functions	T(A)	T(B)	T(C)	T(D)	T(E)	T(F)	T(G)
Teaching functions	Classroom instruction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Translating/ Providing basic meaning of the new vocabulary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Providing extended explanation of the new vocabulary	✓	✓				
	Explaining difficult ideas	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Providing examples	✓	✓		✓		
	Providing prompts while eliciting students to answer		✓	✓			
	Explaining grammatical structure			✓			
	Reviewing the lesson						

								✓
	Asking for students' confirmation		✓					
Classroom management functions	Checking comprehension	✓						
	Checking if students need help/support/further explanation				✓			
	Directing students to the task					✓	✓	
	Praising students				✓			

Note: T(A): teacher A, T(B): teacher B, T(C): teacher C, T(D): teacher D, T(E): teacher E, T(F): teacher F, T(G): teacher G. The observation was done at three grades in primary schools, specifically the performances of teacher A and teacher B from grade 3, teacher C, teacher D and teacher E from grade 4, teacher F and teacher G from grade 5.

4.2 The result from the audio-recording

4.2.1. Functions of code-switching

4.2.1.1. Interpersonal communication function

The data from classroom observation have shown that the investigated teachers code switch from English to Vietnamese in various acts of interpersonal communication function but most typically in the act of greeting. Below is an example.

- **Greeting**

Extract 1

Context: The class was grade 5. Teacher came to class after long holiday. She greeted her students.

Teacher: Hello class! Good morning, how are you today? *Các em có khoẻ không (How are you today)?* I am fine, I am okay, I am tired, or I am sick?. *Cảm thấy sao? (How do you feel?).* How are you? *"How are you?" là gì?(What is "How are you"?)*. *Bạn khoẻ không đúng không? (Are you fine, right?).* *Bạn khoẻ không thì trả lời câu này sao? (Are you fine? How to answer this?).* *Con khoẻ (I'm fine).* I am fine. Thank you.

Students: I am fine. Thank you.

Teacher switches to L1 towards simple sentences to greet students. It is a bit surprising in this case as greetings using clichés such as "How are you?" and responses such as "I'm fine. Thank you." are often believed to be very familiar to students, even to those with low level of proficiency. However, in this case, it is perhaps because students and the teacher came back to school after a long holiday. In such a context, it is understandable that the teachers decided to switch to Vietnamese to facilitate students' understanding and responses.

4.2.1.2. Pedagogical/teaching function

For teaching function, the recorded data have provided evidence that the teachers tend to switch to Vietnamese in many acts to serve the purpose of teaching. This includes giving classroom instruction; translating new vocabulary (basic meaning); explaining further about vocabulary (extended explanation); explaining new, difficult concepts; providing metalinguistic information; providing further examples related to the focus of the lesson or the point being explained; reviewing the lesson and asking for students' confirmation. Our analyses of the data relevant to all these acts are presented below.

- **Classroom instruction**

Extract 2

Context: The class was grade 3. After students listened to the conversation about Mr. Brown family's breakfast, teacher asked them to say the main sentence in the lesson.

Teacher: Lớp (Class) listen and repeat, what do you want to eat Ben?

Students: what do you want to eat Ben?

Teacher: Con đọc theo cô (Repeat after me) what do you want to eat Ben?

Extract 3

Context: That was in grade 4. Teacher wrote the vocabulary on the board then asked students to copy down on their notebook

Teacher: Rồi các con cầm viết chì lên hé, hôm nay chúng ta sẽ học về 12 tháng trong năm, vậy thì đầu tiên các con sẽ học về tháng 1 bạn nào có thể đọc được tháng 1 cho cô, các con biết hông? (Hold your pencils up, today, we will study about twelve months in a year, firstly you will learn about January, who can read January, you know it?). Okay class, repeat after me January.

Students: January

Teacher: ok good, con mới bạn khác lặp lại cho cô (you ask another student to repeat)

In the extract 2, teacher switched to L1 for their classroom instruction. It might be understandable when teacher used L1 to give instruction for grade 3 students because it was their first year of learning English in primary level. They would not be familiar with English. Giving instructions in mother was to ensure that students would understand and do exactly what teachers want them to do. However, in extract 3, students were in grade 4. It means that students have learnt English for one year. The teacher still used mother tongue to instruct students. It could be teachers' habit. Besides, the teacher in this case might have the same purpose with the teacher in extract 2.

Aside from switching to L1 to give instruction, the teachers used code switch to translate or provide basic meaning of the new vocabulary. Extract 4 and 5 below are examples.

- **Translating / Providing basic meaning of the new vocabulary**

In this extract, we can see that the teacher switched to Vietnamese while teaching new words: "food" and "drink".

Extract 4

Context: The class was grade 3. The teacher wanted to introduce new words coming up in the topic of the lesson.

Teacher: Theme six food and drinks, food and drinks. Food and drinks. *Thức ăn và các loại đồ uống* he (*Food and types of drinks*).

Students: (keep silence and listen to the teacher).

In extract 4 above, even when the vocabulary is quite simple and their meaning is actually can be guessed from pictures of the relevant lesson, the teachers still decided to use Vietnamese to make their meaning explicit to her students, especially when the new words come up in the lesson topic. A similar example is found below in extract 5.

Extract 5

Context: The class was grade 4. Teacher introduced new lesson to students.

Teacher: Bài số 6 có tựa đề là thể thao những môn thể thao và sự thư giãn giải trí (*The title of unit six is sports and leisure*). Sports and leisure. Class *lặp lại* dùm cô một lần nữa (*Repeat after me one more time, please*). Theme six sports and leisure.

Students: Theme six sports and leisure.

The difference between extract 4 and 5 is that in extract 4 the teacher switched from English to Vietnamese. She said the words which is the theme/topic of the new unit (*Food and drinks*) in English before saying their meaning in Vietnamese. The teacher in extract 5 did the opposite. She started by saying the theme of the unit in Vietnamese (*Sports and leisure*) before going to English.

Apart from switching to Vietnamese to explain basic meaning of new words, the teachers were also found to use the mother tongue to provide extended explanation, often of the meaning of the new vocabulary. Extract 6 below is an example.

- **Providing extended explanation of the new vocabulary**

Extract 6

Context: The class was grade 3. After letting students listen to the CD player, the teacher explained the way the characters respond in that conversation.

Teacher: Ben trả lời gì? (*What did Ben reply?*). May I have cereal? May I have cereal? Là (is?), con có thể sao? (*May I?*), I have là có mà mình không dịch ra có nghe mình nói con có thể ăn ngũ cốc được hông hé (*We do not translate it into I have, we say that "can I eat cereal?"*). Mình có thể để vô sữa há để ra cái chén rồi cái mình chế sữa vô ăn các con có ăn vậy chưa? (*We can put it into milk, put it in a bowl then we add milk have you ever eaten it yet?*).

Students: Em ăn rồi. Em có ăn rồi (*I have I have*).

The teacher did code switch to explain further about how cereal is often eaten (with milk) and also asked if the students had had that experience, which is whether they had eaten cereal before. It is interesting here to see that the teacher's code switching led students to respond also in Vietnamese.

- **Explaining difficult ideas**

The two situations below were at different classes. The teachers in those classes were different. However, they both chose L1 to explain the pronunciation of English words.

Extract 7

Context: The class was grade 4. Teacher taught her students new vocabulary in the new lesson.

Teacher: Lion dance, lion là sư tử (is lion), lion dance lion dance /dæns/ or dance /dɑ:ns/ cũng được nữa (is still okay), có giọng đọc là /dæns/ có giọng đọc là /dɑ:ns/ đều đúng he (someone pronounce it dance /dæns/ some pronounce it dance/dɑ:ns/ are all correct).

Teacher: you please Tr, watch a lion dance

Tr: watch a lion dance

In this extract, realizing that students might get confused with pronouncing the word “dance” in English, the teacher confirmed students the two ways to pronounce it. It can be pronounce /dæns/ or /dɑ:ns/. Another example is found below in extract 8.

Extract 8

Context: That was in grade 4. Teacher realized that many students found hard with the final sound of the word March. Teacher wanted to explain them clearer.

Teacher: next, tháng 3 con sẽ gọi là March (March you will call it March), now repeat after me March

Students: March

Teacher: À, lớp nó có âm gì tận cùng (ah class what sound does it have at the back)?

Students: âm /ch/ (/ch/ sound)

Teacher: ah ok các con ghi âm /ch/ nhẹ cho cô hé đóng ngoặc lại chúng ta chỉ phát âm trong miệng thôi (you write the light sound /ch/ in the bracket we only pronounce it inside our mouth), now repeat after me March.

Students: March

In extract 8, the teacher switched to L1 to explain the pronunciation, too. However, it was about pronouncing the final consonants in English. It is not familiar with students because they do not have to pronounce them in their mother tongue; therefore, the teacher remind them to not to forget them.

Pronunciation can be considered hard ideas for primary students who are not learnt about pronunciation. In both above extracts, the teacher wanted to ensure that students understand the idea clearly that was why they switch to L1. Switching to L1 would be a simple and quick way to help students understand the way to pronounce English words as well as pronounces the words correctly. It is suitable for low level learners as primary students.

Together with applying mother tongue to explain difficult ideas, primary teachers tend to use L1 to provide examples. The two extracts below are examples.

- **Providing examples**

In these below extracts, we can see that the teachers switched to L1 to provide students examples.

Extract 9

Context: The class was grade 3. After listening to the CD player, teacher introduced the new structure to her students.

Teacher: Bây giờ con muốn hỏi bạn mình (Now you want to ask your friend) what do you want to eat và tên của bạn đó được không? (and the name of that friend, ok?), ví dụ, cô muốn hỏi bạn N muốn ăn gì cô nói (for example, I want to ask N what she wants to eat I say) what do you want to eat, N?, và cô hỏi Q cô sẽ nói (and I ask Q I will say) what do you want to eat, Q?
Students: (keep listen to their teacher)

In this extract, teacher taught students new lesson. The new question- "what do you want to eat?" was come up. This was the new knowledge so teacher was not sure the students know how to make a question adding the name of someone they want to ask, so the teacher switched to L1 to give them examples and say it in L2 right after that in order to help students know how to ask their certain friend by adding the name after the comma in the question.

Extract 10

Context: That was in grade 4. Teacher asked students to find out the difficult words in the text. Then, teacher explained the new words.

Teacher: call? Từ đầu tiên là (the first word is) call, call là gì? (what is call?), gọi (call), ví dụ cô gọi ngày Tết ở Việt Nam là tết âm lịch (for example I call Tet holidays in Viet Nam the lunar new year), we call the lunar new year Tet, còn từ nào khó nữa không (is there any difficult words else)?

Students: (keep silence and listen to their teacher)

In this extract, from the new word that students marked, first of all the teacher use L1 to explain the meaning of the word, then teacher give an example for the use of "call". At the same time, teacher also switched that example from L1 to L2 for the purpose of help students can know how to use "call" correctly.

Apart from this function-providing example, CS is used to provide the prompts while eliciting students to answer by primary teachers. The two following extracts are examples.

- **Providing prompts while eliciting students to answer**

In these below extracts, we can see how the teachers elicit students to answers by providing prompts.

Extract 11

Context: the class was grade 3. Teacher correct the exercise after her students finished it.

Teacher: The boat is?

Students: On the chair

Teacher: Floor, we call the word "floor" sàn nhà (floor). Chiếc thuyền nằm trên sàn (The boat is on the floor), yes or no?

Students: No

The key answer for the exercise in this situation would be the position of the boat. Teacher reminded students to what the word "floor" was in order to help students themselves check whether that was a correct answer.

Extract 12

Context: That was in grade 4. Teacher asked a pair to stand up and practice asks and answers about their birthday.

Teacher: when not what, mình học when mà (we have studied when)

A student: When her your birthday

Teacher: when her không dùng your (do not use your), when's her birthday, mình bỏ your (we remove your)

A student: When's her birthday?

In extract 12, the teacher did not instruct students directly the correct answer. She elicited to student's answer one by denying wrong parts in it. From that, the student could correct the answer. Students may understand clearly as well as keep in mind the knowledge that they get from teacher's elicitation through using CS.

Aside from the purpose of providing prompts while eliciting students to answer, primary teacher wants to explain the grammatical structure by using CS. The below extract will present that.

- **Explaining grammatical structure**

Extract 13

Context: that was in grade 4. Teacher wanted to ask her students again about the structure of the answer for the question "when's your birthday?"

Teacher: when's your birthday? Câu trả lời bắt đầu với từ gì đây? (What word does the answer start with?)

Students: it's

Teacher: it's, cộng cái gì?(plus which one?)

Students: May

Teacher: May May là gì? (What is May?)

Students: tháng (month)

Grammatical structure is a difficult term for primary students, although it is simple structures, they do not know how to do it right without teachers' lecturing. Teacher switched to L1 to explain the structure step by step in order to make it easier so that students can catch it better. Then, they can do following related tasks.

Apart from explaining grammatical structure, reviewing the lesson is a necessary act in teaching primary students. CS is considered a quick and effective way to do that. The below extract is an example.

- **Reviewing the lesson**

We can see how primary teacher review the lesson by using CS.

Extract 14

Context: The class was grade 5. Teacher reviewed the old lesson.

Teacher: I want to ask you 7 giờ (7 o'clock) in English. How do you say 7 giờ (7 o'clock) in English?

Students: Seven o'clock

Teacher: So how about 10 giờ (10 o'clock)?

Students: Ten o'clock

In this extract, the teacher said the time in Vietnamese, the students said it in English. Teacher switched to mother tongue to review the previous lesson. It helped

students show how they remember the knowledge about time by saying it in English right after that.

During teaching time, aside from reviewing lesson, explaining difficult ideas, ect, primary teachers often switch to L1 to ask for their confirmation about their learning activities. An example about it is right below.

- **Asking for students' confirmation**

Extract 15

Context: The class was grade 3. Teacher already introduced the new structure. She wanted to confirm it

Teacher: What do you want to eat? Rồi bây giờ (Then now) "May I have" cộng? (plus?) thêm gì vô? (Add what?) món ăn (food), may I have egg? May I have fish? Vậy bây giờ cô hỏi các con trả lời nhe (So now I ask and you answer, ok)?

Students: Yes

Teacher wanted to remind students to what they have just learnt again by repeat it step by step. Then, she switched to L1 for asking if they can answer her question using similar answers with that was mentioned already.

4.2.1.3. Classroom management function

Although CS in managing classroom was not used as much as in teaching functions, the data from audio recording showed that primary teachers still used CS for some certain cases. Those cases could be mentioned as checking comprehension, checking if students need help/support/further explanation, directing students to the task and praising students. The below analyzed data will clarify all these acts.

- **Checking comprehension**

Extract 16

Context: The class was grade 3. Teacher called on a student to check the old lesson.

Teacher: H, cho cô biết phòng khách tiếng Anh nói sao? (tell me how to say living room in English)?

H: bedroom

Teacher: bedroom right or wrong class? Right là đúng (right is true) wrong là sai (wrong is wrong)

Students: wrong

Teacher: wrong, bedroom là gì (what is bedroom?)

Students: phòng ngủ (bedroom)

Calling on students to ask about their old lesson is popular teaching activities at school. In extract 16, Teacher switched to L1 to check whether the students realized the wrong answer from their friends. From that she knew how her students understand the lesson.

- **Checking if students need help/support/further explanation**

Extract 17

Context: The class was grade 4. Students were about to read the text in their book.

Teacher: My lunar new year in Viet Nam, tết âm lịch ở Việt Nam bây giờ các con nhìn vào bài đọc này xem có từ nào các con thấy khó không (the lunar new year in Vietnam now you have a look at this text to see if there is any difficult words you find out difficult words)

Students: (followed teacher words)

In extract 17, after reading out loud the title of the text, teacher switched to L1 to ask students whether they found any words in the text difficult for them to understand. The teacher implied the idea that she could support students with hard concepts.

- **Directing students to the task**

We can see the way teachers use CS to direct students to the task in below extracts.

Extract 18

Context: The class was grade 4. Teacher asked students to do exercise in their workbook

Teacher: ok good, rồi bây giờ các em mở sách bài tập đó các em làm dùm cô chỉ mở sách bài tập thôi he (now you open your workbook, then do exercise, please, only open workbook) workbook làm phần từ vựng thôi (only do vocabulary section), các em làm bài tập trang 64 (you do exercise page 64) exercise 4 page sixty four, bài tập A (exercise A)

Students: (do exercise)

Extract 19

Context: The class was grade 5. Students had to do exercise in their workbook

Teacher: Các con lấy workbook ra (You take out your workbook) để làm bài tập (to do the exercise), các con làm workbook thì sao (what if you do workbook)? Close your student book. Các con làm (You do) lesson one theme six.

Students: (do exercise in the workbook)

In extract 18 and 19, the teacher asked student to take out their workbook and close their student book. Then she asked them to lesson one in theme six. During this process, the teacher used L1 and L2 alternately. She might wanted students can listen to her request in English and understand what they had to exactly do by listening to mother tongue.

Last but not least, in classroom manage function; giving students compliments also is used in EFL classrooms by primary teacher. The last below extract is an example..

- **Praising students**

Extract 20

Context: The class was grade 4. Teacher called on students to read the words

Teacher: bây giờ N.T (now N.T)

N.T: Get lucky money, visit my family, eat Tet cake (teacher point the words)

Teacher: Good, bạn T đọc khá he (T reads quiet well)

In this extract, code switching is used to praise students. Teachers sometimes found that praising students in L2 is not enough or that students are not familiar with

receiving compliments in English so they may not feel very happy. Therefore, they switch to L1 for the purpose of motivating learners more.

4.3. The result from the interview

The data was collected by interview. The interview was mainly to explore the reason why the teachers code switch in their English classroom.

First of all, all of the teachers confirmed that they code switch in their EFL classrooms. They believe that code switching has an important role in English teaching. They think that it can support them in teaching because their students understand the lessons more easily thanks to their use of Vietnamese.

Next, when they were asked to describe for the researcher common situations for their code switching, the teachers tended to believe that that if they give instruction in English-only, their students might not understand their requests or understand them incorrectly. They often cited the act of explaining the vocabulary to which they believed the use of the mother tongue is useful. A teacher further explained that she would try to find many ways to let the students guess the meaning of the words first such as showing pictures or videos. If her students still cannot understand, she would use the mother tongue. So relying on Vietnamese is believed by the teachers as the last resort which helps their students understand what they say correctly.

While explaining the purpose of code switching, only one participant said that this subject is English and at primary level students need English listening and speaking skill. Therefore, if the teacher uses Vietnamese-only, their students will lose their English listening and speaking ability. Another participant thought that while teaching English, if the teacher uses Vietnamese too often then their students cannot brainstorm in English well but if the teacher uses English-only, the students will not understand the lessons as well as teachers have intended. As such the teachers can use Vietnamese but only when they find it necessary.

One teacher participant said:

[...] We are teaching English. If we use Vietnamese too much or mostly Vietnamese, it prevents the students from brainstorming [in English]. If we use English only, it is not OK because this is primary students. If we use English-only, students do not grasp teachers' intentions and the content of the lessons, so we will code switch, two parallel languages so that they support each other. When it is necessary we can use it [...].

Besides, when asked further about whether code switching affects English learning and while they code switch, two different viewpoints identified from the participants. Half of them do not think code switching has negative influence on English learning and what is why they often code switch. The participants of this viewpoint share the view that they all live in Vietnamese environment, and so if they disuse Vietnamese, it would be hard for students to grasp the ideas from English lessons and that English only approach would be more appropriate if they lived in English speaking environment. It would then be easy for students to acquire the language. However, these teachers are

aware that they should reduce code switching for good students. For lower level students they can code switch more to help them follow others students better.

Despite admitting they used Vietnamese in their classroom, the other groups of the teacher participants believe that code switching does have bad influence on their students' English learning. One participant explained:

[...] I also think that code switching affects English learning much because learning English is mostly to practice English listening and speaking. If teachers use Vietnamese too much, students will be passive. They will not be active. For example, when they listen to an English sentence, they are sure that teachers will translate it into Vietnamese for them, so they do not care what that sentence anymore. Therefore, afterwards, when communicating with other people, they listen to that sentence again. They will not understand the meaning of that sentence [...]

And so teachers of this group reported they tend to reduce the amount of Vietnamese in their classroom.

In addition, all participants confirmed that they code switch most often when teaching grade 3 rather than other grades. To them grade 3 students are very young. This is their first year of studying English. They will not understand the teacher' requests what s/he wants them to do or say. Therefore, teachers will teach them English commands slowly so that they can be familiar with English. A teacher also mentioned that she would use English more often, and code witched less when they move to grade 4 and 5. One of the participants said that she just uses Vietnamese for classroom instruction in grade 3 when the students do not understand and that the teacher should not use much of the mother tongue in English teaching.

5. Limitations and recommendation

5.1 Limitations

This study is to investigate primary teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms. Though the researcher received supports from her supervisor and friends during the process studying, the study still has certain limitations.

Firstly, the influence of covid-19 must be mentioned. It affected to data collection process. The time for collecting data was slower than expectation. After being back to teaching, the participants had to catch up with the time in order to make sure that the students studied the rest lessons completely. That impacted their teaching.

Secondly, although this study is qualitative research, the limited participants affected the result. The findings cannot be used to generalize CS of all primary teachers.

Thirdly, although the study explored the functions of primary EFL teachers' CS, it does not exam the frequency of the use of CS in EFL classrooms so the priority of the CS's functions has not been yet exploited.

5.2 Suggestions for future researches

From the limitations of the present study, the further researchers should be considered basing on these following suggestions. First, they should be conducted with the larger number of primary teachers. Second, the research about the frequency of the appearance of CS is also an interesting issue that should be explored.

6. Conclusions

This study was carried out with the aim of researching the functions of primary teachers' code-switching in EFL classrooms, teachers' perceptions of CS and exploring the underlying reasons of why they do code-switch. The study focuses on examining what primary teachers' code switch for in their EFL classrooms and understanding the teachers' perceptions of why they use CS in their classrooms.

On the basis of the data analysis, the following major findings have been identified. The result revealed that the investigated primary teachers do code-switching their EFL classrooms. The two main functions of CS identified in this study are interpersonal communication function and pedagogical/teaching function. It was found that the participants rarely applied CS for interpersonal communication function for which the communicative purpose is real. However, there was a case that the teachers used L1 and L2 at the same time to greet grade 5 students-the highest level in primary school. The teacher still switched to L1 to greet students. It can be explained that the students had then just come back to school from a very long holiday, so the teacher wanted to facilitate students' understanding and responses. In terms of teaching functions, the functions of CS were found being classroom instruction, translating/providing basic meaning of the new vocabulary, explaining difficult ideas, providing examples, providing prompts while eliciting students to answer, explaining grammatical structure, reviewing the lesson and asking for students' confirmation. As for classroom management function, checking comprehension, checking if students need help/support/ further explanation, directing students to the task and praising students were specific aspects of CS's functions were found in observations.

Mentioning the reasons for doing CS, the participants think that it can support them in teaching because their students understand the lessons more easily thanks to their use of Vietnamese. Furthermore, CS helps ensure English listening ability because students could at least listen to English words before they were translated or explained by L1. In addition, the participants also believe that applying CS in EFL classrooms help them to save time.

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