

**THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

DAO THI NGOC

**HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS' CODE-SWITCHING:
BELIEF AND PRACTICE**

(Hoạt động chuyển mã ngôn ngữ của giáo viên tiếng Anh Trung học
Phổ thông: Từ quan điểm đến thực tiễn)

M.A. THESIS

Field: English Linguistics

Code: 8220201

THAI NGUYEN – 2019

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Supervisor: Dr. Nguyen Trong Du

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this submission of the minor thesis entitled “*high school English teachers’ code switching: Belief and practice*” is my own work. To the best of my knowledge, it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at SFL or any other educational institutions. The thesis has not been submitted to any other examining body and has not been published. Any contribution made to the research by others is explicitly acknowledged in the thesis.

Thai Nguyen, July 2019

Dao Thi Ngoc

Approved by
SUPERVISOR

Dr. Nguyen Trong Du

Date: July, 2019

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents the findings of a study which aims to investigate how teachers of English at Vu Van Hieu high school switch between English and Vietnamese in their classrooms and how this practice match with their beliefs on the use of both languages in EFL teaching. In order to achieve those objectives, the study relies on two methods of data collection namely classroom observation and interviews. During classroom observation, observation sheets were used in combination with audio – recordings. Interviews were conducted with the participation of both teachers and students. Data collected were transcribed, grouped into themes, and explain in details. Results show that the teachers switched between English and Vietnamese with different levels of frequency and in different types. The teachers’ code-switching has some functions such as: to draw attention of students to the lesson, to check whether students get clear about what they are supposed to do next, to explain the meaning of vocabulary and the usage of grammatical phenomenon, and to deliver instructions and tighten the mutual relationship between teachers and students. These findings go quite well with what the teachers and students say about code – switching. On the other hand, both teachers and students believe that using Vietnamese is necessary for the effectiveness of the teachers’ instructions. Moreover, they both agreed that the amount of Vietnamese used in EFL classrooms should be reduced to minimum and should be based on students’ competence.

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Nowadays English is considered as a global language, and the majority of people who use it as a tool of communications are non-native, i.e. most of the users are bilingual or multilingual. It is commonplace to see English being used and studied without a linguistic environment beside classroom hours; English is rarely used in their real life. Therefore, in English teaching and learning context, code-switching is also seen as inevitable either on purpose or by chance.

Code-switching in classrooms has been discussed for several decades worldwide, and research on this case is often conducted to find out how code-switching takes place between English and another language such as: Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Turkish and German and so forth (for instance, Auer, 1998, Ferguson, 2003; Flyman, 1991; Marcaro, 2009; Sert, 2005; a well-known Vietnamese Nguyen T. N, 2016; and other teachers of English. It can be said that nowadays, code-switching is one of the most emerging trends in linguistic field, particularly in bilingual or multilingual environments.

During the history of the matter as Macaro (2013) proclaimed, the major issues in code-switching debated include causes, types and its roles in teaching and learning English. Additionally, researchers keep a close eye on how teachers' perceive and practice their code-switching in the reality or whether code-switching serves as a functioning tool in assisting learners or appear to be stumbling blocks for them in acquiring language skills. Consequently, publicized reports often mention the weaknesses as well as the strengths of code-switching.

In line with the academic study trend of code-switching worldwide, there have been voices from Vietnam in the form of conference reports, articles, master and doctorate thesis, which are popular with research conducted by teaching staff from universities throughout Vietnam as well as overseas Vietnamese linguists. Many of the researchers specialized in this field have focused on analyzing theoretical matters as well as exploring the ongoing facts.

1.2. Rationale

English is widely regarded as one of the key languages that help Vietnam integrate into the world; therefore, studying English plays an important role in almost

all Vietnamese school curricula. However, in the classroom where English is treated as a foreign language (EFL), as a teacher of English and after years of teaching, I have realized that many Vietnamese teachers face several challenges in their attempt to make their students comprehend. This issue has raised heated discussions among teachers over the problem of how and how much Vietnamese should be exploited in order to assure students' understanding as well as to achieve the goals set in teaching procedures. Therefore, the aim of this study mainly focuses on figuring out how teachers' belief matches with what they do within their teaching practice at Vu Van Hieu high school.

This is the reason that leads to the study proposal entitled ***“High school English teachers’ code switching: belief and practice.”*** The study is expected to help high school teachers investigate the code-switching in depth as it can shed light on the beliefs and practices of code switching in the teaching of English as a second language in bilingual classrooms.

1.3. Aims of the study

This study deals with high school English teachers' perception and their code-switching between English and Vietnamese in the classroom and also uncovers how much their realities match their perception, i.e., between their belief and their practice.

1.4. Research questions

Based on the aims set up above, the study tries to answer the following two questions:

- 1. How do teachers of English practice code-switching in their English classes?*
- 2. How do their practices of code-switching match with their perception and students' opinions about the use of English and Vietnamese in their English classes?*

1.5. Significance of the study

This study asserts the key factors including the culprits, the effects and the aims of code-switching of the teaching process, and the relationship between beliefs and practice of teachers in the classroom.

Furthermore, in this study, it is hoped that the findings will give me some experience of teaching English as well as equip myself with up-to-date knowledge in code-switching with my colleagues.

1.6. Scope of the study

The study focuses on the teachers' opinions about using both languages (English

and Vietnamese) and their common practice of using them. In other words, it places focus on what they say and what they do with regard to their use of languages in their instructions of English.

1.7. Design of the study

The thesis consists of five chapters as follows:

Chapter I: Introduction. This chapter includes the rationales of the study, the aims and scope of the study as well as the research questions.

Chapter II discusses the previously conducted research by both foreign and domestic authors to give the whole picture of the matter. In this chapter, key definitions are brought forward including bilingualism, code-switching as well as their types and categories and so on.

Chapter III is composed of methodology which consists of the key methods of collecting and analyzing data. Also, in this chapter participants and procedure of the thesis are mentioned and analyzed in depth.

Chapter IV analyses the data obtained from interviews as well as classroom observation.

Chapter V concludes the findings of the present study as well as the suggestions for further study and the shortcomings of this thesis.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Previous studies

The pioneers in this field in the 1970s can be mentioned such as Fishman, Platt & Platt with the studies published in 1971 and 1975 respectively. Those described and discussed the situation of individual cases and code-switching patterns. In the later

decade, linguistics including Romain (1989) and Poplack (1980) classified two main constraints of code-switching: morpheme and equivalence in syntax. In the last decade of the twentieth century, linguists paid more attention to causes of code-switching and role of teachers in the classroom where code-switching took place. This movement has resulted in projects concerning classroom context of bilingualism, such as English and French by Flyman and NicolasBurenhult (1991) with the study named “*Code-switching in second language teaching of French*”. The role of code-switching lied in the heart of focus. Undoubtedly, in Flyman’s research, switching codes was used a tool of emotion expression (anger, sympathy), topic change, misunderstanding avoidance. In the period of that decade, the core of linguists’ attention appeared the frequency and the area in which teachers’ speech was code-switched, for instance, Martin-Jones, M. (1995) claimed that code-switching in the classroom context was notably between English and Spanish. Additionally, it served various functions.

Since the twenty first century has benchmarked a booming era of code-switching studies in which many other languages are the subjects of examination, for instance, code-switching between English (the most common language) and Malay, Chinese, Japanese, African languages and so forth. Discussions among scholars upon the use of mother tongue, types and functions of code-switching have been raised and heated. However, the above mentioned study findings just made a list of code-switching types, reasons or purposes regardless of explaining the advantages or disadvantages of code-switching in the classroom. On the contrary, others reasoned that code-switching was beneficial towards students’ learning.

Nowadays, code-switching is widely accepted as a teaching method, thus, attitudes expressed by students and teachers have been the subjects of focus.

In terms of code-switching history in Vietnam, it surely first officially started when French settlers opened schools. The majority of studies concentrate on code-switching behaviours and patterns in the classroom and nearly most of the studies are of ten years of age; typically, the researchers are both domestic and oversea teachers, lecturers and linguists, such as Nguyen, T. N (2016), Nguyen, H. Q. (2011) and others.

It is suggested from the above revision that code-switching be an integral part of teaching process. More or less, it still exists, and as a result, it is even accepted as a teaching method. Even several linguists have admitted its effectiveness and benefits in

teaching and learning although others emphasized its negative effects.

2.2. Bilingualism and code-switching

Grosjean (1982, p.18) pertained bilingualism as “the regular use of two or more languages” regardless of levels of proficiency. Bilingualism is categorized in three types by Weinrich (1953) including compound, coordinate and subordinate.

Code-switching is viewed differently by bilingual researchers, whereas it is generally accepted as switching from a language to another. In the classrooms, code-switching, the common standpoint amongst researchers often links it with the usage of mother tongue or source language (L1) and the foreign language, in other words, target language (L2).

2.3. Code-switching in teaching and learning context

2.3.1. Definition of code-switching in teaching

Teachers’ code-switching has been categorized into two broad groups, namely, classroom management and content transmission by Canagarajah (1995). Later on, Ferguson (2003) developed the idea to part of curriculum access, classroom management and interpersonal relations.

In the classroom context where code-switching is not an exception, it is widely accepted that using two languages alternatively is code-switching. Teachers of foreign languages are the ones who use code-switching in classrooms as a teaching aid in their lessons.

In teaching context, code-switching relates to how often and types of code switching are employed by teachers and how it affects the learning result of students. Some other notable definitions of code-switching can be seen as “*the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within a speech event*” (Bokamba, 1989, p.279).

In conclusion, code-switching is still a controversial issue among researchers. However deeply it is studied, there will not be a single definition. It is obvious in previous studies that code-switching is used intentionally in the classroom. The reasons are diverse, however, the final purpose is to “*help students to learn English*” (Lee, 2010, p.256).

2.3.2. Purposes and types of code-switching

Code-switching is a common activity in the English lessons led by teachers in