AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON PERSPECTIVES OF VIETNAMESE EXPERIENCED TEACHERS AND STUDENT TEACHERS TOWARD TEACHERS' CODE-SWITCHING

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There have existed different perspectives on teachers' use of code-switching (CS) in second/foreign language (L2) classrooms. While some suggest teachers' exclusive use of L2 in L2 classrooms, others argue that teachers' switching to first language (L1) can have valuable contributions to L2 teaching. Also, little research has examined student teachers' perspectives on this issue even though student teaching experience plays a significant role in teacher education programmes. This exploratory qualitative study aims to compare the perspectives of student teachers and experienced teachers toward CS use in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Vietnam. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with fourteen Vietnamese EFL student teachers and experienced teachers. The findings revealed that all student teachers and experienced teachers had positive attitudes toward CS. In line with previous research, CS was reported to be employed for several different pedagogical functions in L2 classrooms, such as explaining grammar points, clarifying difficult concepts, checking students' comprehension, and dealing with students' misbehaviours. In addition, apart from the previously reported benefits of CS, such as facilitating students' comprehension, saving time, motivating students, and accommodating students' low English proficiency levels, the student teachers in this study also maintained that CS could help them address their anxiety in delivering instructions while the experienced teachers believed that CS could help them deal with their lack of confidence about their pronunciation and avoid students' judgements. Based on the findings, this paper suggests that CS could be considered as an instructional strategy and EFL teacher education programs in Vietnam should consider incorporating training on teachers' CS use to improve their awareness and confidence.

Keywords: Code-switching, English as a foreign language, Teachers, Student teachers, Perspectives

Introduction

In foreign/second language (L2) teaching, the teachers' use of first language or mother tongue (L1) in L2 classrooms has been discussed over recent years and attracted contradictory opinions. Some researchers recommend L2 teachers using L2 exclusively in their classrooms (e.g. Chambers, 1991; Krashen, 1985; MacDonald, 1993; Moeller & Roberts 2013) while others believe that switching to L1 has its valuable contributions to foreign language teaching (e.g. Atkinson, 1987, 1993; Campa & Nassaji, 2009; Cook, 2001; Critchley, 2002; Harbord, 1992; Macaro, 1997, 2001, 2005; Schweers, 1999). Proponents of teachers' CS use argued that excluding teachers' use of L1 in L2 classrooms is impractical and prevents learners from using L1 as a crucial tool for their L2 learning (e.g. Atkinson, 1993; Macaro, 1997).

In the context of Vietnam, only a few studies have investigated this issue (e.g. Grant & Nguyen, 2017; Le, 2014; Nguyen, 2012) while no research has examined how Vietnamese EFL student teachers perceive code-switching during their student teaching experience, the most influential part in teacher education programmes (Glenn, 2006; Tang, 2003). For student teachers, the role of mentoring is undeniably important and experienced teachers are assigned to guide student teachers during practicum; thus, experienced teachers can be seen as important models for student teachers. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the beliefs of both student teachers and experienced teachers on using code-switching in L2 classrooms to gain a deeper insight into their teaching practices and subsequently inform relevant policies and teacher training programmes.

Literature review

Different perspectives on code-switching

Code-switching (CS) in L2 classrooms refers to teachers' choice of languages between the foreign language which is taught and the language of either school or society (Simon, 2000). There have existed different perspectives on the use of CS in L2 classrooms.

Some researchers advocate L2 use in L2 classrooms. Krashen (1985) suggested L2-only use in ESL/EFL classrooms because L2 environment is of "paramount importance to success in a new language" (p. 13). Similarly, Chamber (1992) suggested that students should be exposed to L2 in L2 classrooms as much as possible. MacDonald (1993) argued that excessive reliance on L1 could be demotivating to students and negatively affect their need to develop their understanding of L2. Moeller and Roberts (2013) commented that: "Together with best pedagogical practices, maximising the TL [target language] in the classroom will ensure a lively and engaging language experience that can approximate authentic language use and make language learning meaningful to learners" (p.35).

Others, however, take the merits of CS into consideration. Macaro (1997, 2001, 2005) viewed L1 usage as a natural practice in the L2 acquisition process and that using both languages seems to be a more time-efficient strategy than using only the target language. Similarly, some other researchers also considered CS as a time-saving method in EFL classrooms (Atkinson, 1987;

Critchley, 2002; Harbord, 1992; Medgyes, 1994) since using L1 could reduce dramatically the amount of time spent on explaining the lessons. In addition, Cook (2001) supported incorporating CS in L2 classrooms because he contended that the use of L1 was a natural phenomenon and could create authentic learning environments and it thus should not necessarily be discouraged.

Functions of code-switching

Teachers' CS has been reported to serve different functions for both teachers and students. For teachers, L1 was suggested to help them in explaining difficult concepts as well as grammar instruction (e.g. Kim & Petraki, 2009; Levine, 2003; Macaro, 2001; Schweers, 1999). Atkinson (1987) indicated that the switch between L1 and L2 could provide "useful reinforcement of structural, conceptual and sociolinguistic differences between the native and target language" (p.224). Atkinson (1987) also noted that using L1 to check comprehension of the underlying concepts in either a listening or a reading text was even much quicker and more effective than other techniques. Medgyes (1994) considered L1 as "an indispensable teaching device for explaining structures and vocabulary, giving instructions, doing various kinds of exercises, and so on" (p.65).

In addition, Macaro (1997, 2001) reported other uses of L1 for various purposes in EFL classrooms, such as giving instructions for pair or group activities, dealing with students' misbehaviours, fostering relationship with students, making instructions clearer to students and coping with the lack of time in class. Polio and Duff (1994) pointed out that teachers could switch to L1 for isolated words or phrases in L2 with the goal to ensure the key information was conveyed to students or for rapport-building and interpersonal purposes with the view to relieving the anxiety of students. These functions were also mentioned in Cahyani et al. (2018). In Orland-Barak and Yinon's (2005) study on Jewish and Arabian student teachers, they used CS for different functions in communicative L2 classrooms, including comparison and clarification of L2 meanings, encouraging communication and student participation, enhancing classroom management and rapport with students.

As for students, CS was suggested to reduce the anxiety and pressure on them (Schweers, 1999). Schweers (1999) reported that his students seemed to be enthusiastic about classroom activities and learnt L2 actively and positively when L1 was used in the classroom, justifying that teachers' using L1 in EFL classrooms proved their respect for the culture and native language of their students and thus reduced the negative attitudes of students toward their L2 learning process. Atkinson (1987) also suggested that using L1 encouraged students as well as teachers to actively say what they wanted to say. He indicated that teachers could, by means of CS, encourage their students to brainstorm effectively to express their thoughts, which helped them to speak the target language. Additionally, Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) and Franklin (1990) suggested that advanced learners demonstrated good progress when they learned grammar in L1.

Beliefs of teachers and student teachers about code-switching

Teachers' belief systems are considered the main sources of teachers' classroom practices when they illustrated the information, values, attitudes, expectations, assumptions and theories related to teaching along with learning (Richards, 1998). Teachers' beliefs can have an impact on the approach to their instructional practices as well as language teaching (Burns, 1992). On the other

hand, student teachers, or pre-service teachers, who may experience high levels of stress and anxiety during their practicum (Agustiana, 2014; Paker, 2011), can bring their specific ideas and beliefs into their teacher training programme, which can affect their knowledge construction together with the approach that they follow during practicum (Kagan, 1992). In other words, student teachers' beliefs can "influence what they say and do in classroom, which, in turn, shapes their beliefs" (Zheng, 2009, p.80). Considering the importance of teachers and student teachers' beliefs, studies investigating them are necessary.

A number of publications have discussed the beliefs of teachers and student teachers concerning CS and generally showed that they held positive attitudes toward it (Batemen, 2008; Macaro, 1997, 2001, 2005; Schweers, 1999). Macaro (2005) found that most bilingual teachers considered CS as "unfortunate and regrettable but necessary" (p. 68), which he found common among teachers in different age phases and educational contexts. Schweers (1999) reported that all teachers reported using L1 to some extent. Bahous et al. (2014), however, reported that teachers had mixed views toward CS use. Some teachers supported using CS while other denying it, but classroom observations showed that they all used CS but some were not aware of using it. Regarding student teachers, Bateman (2008) found that they advocated using CS because they found it difficult to manage their class by using L2 only and beginner students or those having trouble with cognitive ability and abstract grammatical concepts could face more difficulties in L2 acquisition than advanced students.

Code-switching in Vietnam

In Vietnam, Le (2011) revealed that Vietnamese EFL teachers often switched to Vietnamese to check students' understanding of meta-language as well as to explain grammatical rules. They had a tendency to use English first and then translated the message into Vietnamese since they perceived that students with low English proficiency levels could understand grammar thoroughly with L1 support. More recently, Grant and Nguyen (2017) found that Vietnamese EFL teachers used CS frequently for both pedagogical and affective reasons, such as students' low English proficiency levels, lesson content, students' attitudes and emotion, along with teachers' lack of awareness of CS. Nguyen's (2012) study on the use of CS in tertiary context in Vietnam found that contextual factors, including time budget in class, students' English proficiency levels, cultural values, teacher evaluation systems, and teacher cognition can affect CS use. These studies, however, merely focused on experienced teachers, so it is unclear how student teachers perceive CS during their practicum.

Research gaps

In the context of Vietnam, a few studies have investigated CS in L2 classes and found that it is frequently used in EFL classes and supported by the majority of Vietnamese EFL teachers and students (Grant & Nguyen, 2017; Nguyen, 2012; Le, 2014). No studies to date, however, have investigated the perspectives of Vietnamese EFL student teachers on CS use or compared them with those of experienced teachers. Such studies may have important implications for EFL teacher education in Vietnam since they can shed light on whether these teachers are fully aware of CS use in their teaching, which is considered essential (Bahous et al., 2014). For that reason, this study was conducted to address the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers towards CS?

2. In which situations do Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers report to use CS?

3. What do Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers think are the benefits of CS?

Methodology

Participants

A total of 14 Vietnamese participants including 7 student teachers (6 females, 1 male) aged 21-22 and 7 experienced teachers (all females) aged 37 to 40 in different public high schools in both rural and urban areas in northern Vietnam participated in this study. All the experienced teachers held a university degree in English language education and their class sizes often ranged from 35 to 40 students. Their self-reported English proficiency was upper-intermediate, or equivalent to B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The seven experienced teachers in this study had extensive experience in tutoring student teachers in their teaching practicum. These experienced and student teachers were selected based on their teaching experience as well as their willingness to participate in the study. All the names mentioned in this paper are pseudo names to preserve the participants' anonymity.

Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were employed because, as Payne (2000) suggested, the semi-structured interviews are flexible enough to allow the respondents to not only expand on the relevant issues but also initiate new topics. The interviews were conducted in either Vietnamese or English at the participants' discretion. Because the participants were based in different places, the interviews were conducted via Skype and Facebook video calls (10 via Skype and 2 via Facebook). Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Procedure

First, the participants and researchers agreed on schedules for interviews through Skype or Facebook. Then, consent forms were sent to the interviewees to ask for their permission to record and use their data anonymously for the study. After the interviews, all recordings were transcribed. The transcripts were offered to the interviewees to confirm their accuracy because 'member checks', i.e. participants' reading data to check, are important to establish credibility in a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The participants read, commented and made suggestions for some corrections when necessary. Afterwards, those transcripts were translated from Vietnamese (if necessary), coded, and analysed thematically. The answers from both Vietnamese EFL teachers and student teachers were categorised into three aspects, including their general attitudes toward CS, the reported situations in which they used CS and the reported advantages of CS in English classrooms. These categories were later used to identify the similarities and differences between experienced teachers and student teachers' beliefs. Where necessary, the translated quotes below have been modified to clarify meaning, following discussion with participants.

Findings

Research question 1: What are the attitudes of Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers towards CS?

The attitudes of Vietnamese EFL student teachers towards CS

All Vietnamese EFL student teachers showed positive attitudes to CS. The interviewed Vietnamese EFL student teachers generally viewed CS as an interesting way of teaching English.

> I love to use code-switching in my English classes. It's so easy for me to actively switch between two languages. It's very interesting. (Lan)

> I am a type of person who cannot do something repeatedly for a long time, but using code-switching in teaching English is like reading books in a new pattern and I can thus stick to it for a long period of time because it's extremely interesting to me. (Ngoc)

Another student teacher said she supported CS since it could help all students understand the lesson correctly regardless of their English proficiency.

> To me, switching from English to Vietnamese in my English classrooms is an effective tool to help students of different English proficiency levels to fully understand English lessons. (Van)

The student teachers also considered CS realistic in the Vietnamese context, saying English-only classrooms are not suitable for Vietnamese EFL learners whose language skills are not yet good enough to due to their limited exposure to English outside their classrooms:

> To me, using code-switching in teaching English is necessary because Vietnamese students do not have a suitable English speaking environment to get used to using English only in the class. That is to say, their speaking and listening are not well developed, they thus may not understand when their teachers use English only. Accordingly, I think code-switching is suitable for Vietnamese students to understand the lessons. (Sa)

The attitudes of Vietnamese experienced EFL teachers towards CS

All the Vietnamese experienced high school EFL teachers involved in this study held positive views toward CS for many reasons, one of which was because CS was reported to give them more confidence and motivation.

> I feel more confident when I use code-switching because it gives me more flexibility. This also somewhat motivated me in my teaching. (Ly)

> When I used only English to teach my students, they showed their tiredness toward learning English which really demotivated my willingness to teach English. But when I switched to Vietnamese to teach them in some difficult situations, it seemed to make them feel better. Thus, code-switching somehow inspired me to teach. (Hien)

CS was also perceived to be an effective tool to encourage their students' willingness to learn English:

> I think using code-switching in teaching English is so interesting and effective because I do not need to force students to remember a number of difficult terms and concepts by heart, which is too stressful for them. In fact, besides learning English, they need to learn other subjects at school, so I think that is one of the reasons why they are not interested in English. However, when I use code-switching in class, my students seem to feel much more comfortable, which can facilitate their English learning process. (Lan)

Research question 2: In which situations do Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers report to use CS?

In general, both Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers reported to frequently use CS in teaching their EFL classes in a variety of situations. The Vietnamese EFL student teachers, however, all showed their lack of confidence about when and how CS should be used and questioned whether it would be theoretically appropriate to use CS or not.

> Honestly I'm not sure about whether and when I am allowed to use code-switching in my English classes. I just use it when I feel I need to, but sometimes I feel scared when doing so because I don't know if it's appropriate at all.

Situations of using CS from the perspectives of Vietnamese EFL student teachers

The most common situations in which the student teachers reported to use CS were to explain grammar points and to clarify difficult concepts. All seven student teachers reported that they mostly employed CS in these cases with the hope of helping students understand the knowledge and pass their examinations:

> I can frankly say that, during English lessons I mostly used Vietnamese while teaching both grammar and new concepts because I wanted to help my students can understand the key knowledge to pass the tests successfully. (Ngoc)

Another common situation where the student teachers said they used CS was to check students' comprehension. When realising students' uncertainty about the knowledge that they taught, the Vietnamese EFL student teachers had a tendency to switch to Vietnamese to check their understanding:

> Sometimes, when realising that my students seem to be worried about the content knowledge, I often switch to Vietnamese to check their understanding. (Van)

The interviewed student teachers also reported to sometimes use CS to give instructions for in-class activities and deal with students' misbehaviours.

> Since students' English proficiency was not quite high, I had to switch to Vietnamese whenever I needed to make my instruction well understood or deal with their inappropriate behaviours in class. (Lan)

Situations of using CS from the perspectives of Vietnamese experienced EFL teachers

Similar to the student teachers, all the experienced teachers in this study, viewed that L1 was mainly employed to teach grammar and clarify difficult concepts. They reported that they used CS in these situations with a view to helping students understand the lessons more quickly and easily.

> I often use Vietnamese to teach both grammar and new concepts because I realise that it can help my students understand the lessons easily. (Sa)

As for grammar, the experienced teachers perceived that there were significant differences between L1 and L2 and thus using CS in these cases could help their students easily visualise the variations in the grammatical structures of L1 and L2.

> Due to the differences between Vietnamese and English, when I taught them the positions of English adjectives, my students could hardly understand English grammatical structures. Therefore, I had to use Vietnamese to make it easier for them. (Lan)

Additionally, the experienced teachers reported that CS was commonly used to address students' misbehaviours. They believed that their students' English proficiency levels were quite low; thus, their students might not understand their requests as well as advice in English:

> It's hard for me to use English to deal with my students' improper behaviours because their English proficiency levels are quite low. I'm therefore afraid that they cannot understand what I say. When I switch to Vietnamese, this issue can be solved effectively. (Hien)

Three of the experienced teachers also said that they sometimes used CS for checking their students' comprehension and giving instructions for activities or games in class.

> In some circumstances where the instructions were complicated and students didn't understand them in English, I had to switch to Vietnamese to make sure that they all knew what they would have to do in those activities, especially those new activities they had never experienced before or those which were very complex. (Mai)

Research question 3: What do Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers think are the benefits of CS?

Benefits of CS from the perspectives of Vietnamese EFL student teachers

Six out of seven student teachers believed that it was beneficial to use Vietnamese to aid students' comprehension and deal with students of different English proficiency levels, especially low-level students. They pointed out that there were a number of Vietnamese students who were not placed into suitable English classes for their existing English proficiency levels. This problem, according to them, made it difficult for those students to understand the lessons explained in English and might take teachers a huge amount of time to provide long and repeated explanations. Consequently, as they reported, they needed to switch from English to Vietnamese to facilitate students' comprehension in EFL classrooms.

> In my English classrooms, I often switch from English to Vietnamese because there are various English proficiency levels in my class. For students who have poor English proficiency, I often switch to Vietnamese more often than for those with higher levels of English proficiency. The reason is that I realise that some low-level students cannot catch my points when I teach them in English, although I try my best to explain to them several times. Thus, sometimes the only way that I can help them easily understand what I teach is using Vietnamese when necessary. (Ngoc)

All the student teachers also reported that CS could help them deal with the pressure of time. Since the allowed time for each lesson was 45 minutes, to deal with different tasks in a lesson, the student teachers had to finish each certain section on time in order that they could move on to another. In this case, they believed that using Vietnamese was the quickest method to help students understand the content knowledge.

> Frankly speaking, for teaching difficult grammar points such as verb tenses or phrasal verbs, it takes me a long period of time to help students understand what I want them to acquire when I use English to teach. Consequently, I cannot either cover all the content of the lesson or finish my lesson in the allowed time. Thus, to address this problem, I have a tendency to use Vietnamese to teach them in such cases. (Thuy)

CS was also claimed to help create a motivating learning environment for students. The student teachers believed that using CS could reduce cognitive loads for their students, which makes their students feel more secure as well as comfortable and thus facilitates their students' learning process.

> I think the more comfortable students feel, the better they acquire knowledge. Thus, I often switch to Vietnamese when I need to teach some difficult content with the aim of avoiding demotivating my students. (Lan)

In addition, three of the investigated student teachers admitted that CS can help them handle their stress and anxiety when they gave instructions as well:

> I'm not used to standing in front of people and I'm always afraid that I might be misunderstood, so I'm quite stressed whenever I have to give instructions. Then, I switch to Vietnamese at times to help me cope with that stress. (Hieu)

Benefits of CS from the perspectives of Vietnamese experienced EFL teachers

All the experienced teachers reported that switching from English to Vietnamese could help aid their students' understanding effectively. They explained that their students had inadequate knowledge of grammar and essential social background knowledge; therefore, they thought it could make them further dislike learning English if they continued teaching grammar and vocabulary in English only.

> Almost all of my students have little knowledge of grammar as well as social background knowledge, so if I keep teaching grammar and vocabulary in English, they may even hate learning English more. Thus, I need to switch to Vietnamese to help them understand the lessons effectively. (Xa)

Also, two other experienced teachers explained that CS could be effective for diverse English proficiency levels of students, especially for those with low levels of English competence.

> For students who have low English proficiency levels, I often switch to Vietnamese more often than high level students since I believe that by doing so, all students in my English class can understand the content knowledge. (Ha)

Another benefit of CS mentioned among Vietnamese experienced EFL teachers was to save time. By using CS in teaching English, they believed they would not be scared of running out of time and could spend time on other activities in their classes.

> Whenever teaching grammar in English, I cannot finish my lesson in the allotted time because I need to explain difficult terms for my students several times. Therefore, I decide to switch to Vietnamese to save time for other useful activities in the lesson. (Linh)

Five out of seven experienced teachers even admitted that using CS could help them hide their weaknesses about their pronunciation and avoid their students' judgements. They said that they did not want their language competence to be questioned by their students just because they might mispronounce some words; therefore, they chose to switch to Vietnamese.

> In some teaching situations, I did not know how to pronounce the words correctly so I decided to skip speaking aloud those words in front of my students and switch to Vietnamese to avoid my language competence being judged by my students. (Xa)

Discussion

Overall, it could be seen that both Vietnamese EFL student teachers and experienced teachers held positive views toward CS in their English classrooms. Positive attitudes among Vietnamese EFL student teachers and experienced teachers were similar to those attitudes of teachers found in previous studies (e.g. Macaro, 1997, 2001; Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005; Schweers; 1999). Regarding situations where CS is used, both Vietnamese EFL student teachers and experienced teachers reported to frequently employ CS, which was in line with Grant and Nguyen (2017).

The pedagogical functions of CS reported by both the student teachers and experienced teachers in the research were also supported by previous research: to explain grammar points (e.g. Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989; Franklin, 1990; Polio & Duff, 1994; Levine, 2003; Kim & Petraki, 2009), to clarify difficult concepts (e.g. Schweers, 1999; Macaro, 2001), to check students' comprehension (e.g. Atkinson, 1987; Schweers, 1999), to give instructions (e.g. Macaro, 1997; Polio & Duff, 1994) and to address their students' behaviour issues (e.g. Bateman, 2008; Cahyani et al., 2018; Macaro, 2001).

In terms of the benefits of using CS, this study reported similar findings to previous studies, including aiding students' understanding of the content knowledge (e.g. Bateman, 2008; Macaro, 2001), saving time (e.g. Atkinson, 1987; Critchley, 2002; Macaro, 1997, 2001, 2005; Medgyes, 1994), motivating students (e.g. Schweers, 1999), and accommodating students' low English proficiency levels (e.g. Bateman, 2008; Grant & Nguyen, 2017).

There were, however, some additional benefits of CS perceived by the Vietnamese student teachers and experienced in this study that were not reported in previous studies. For the student teachers, three out of

seven believed that CS can help them cope with their stress and anxiety during their giving instructions, indicating these feelings might be experienced by some Vietnamese student teachers as similarly found in other contexts (Agustiana, 2014; Paker, 2011).

The majority of Vietnamese experienced EFL teachers in this study, on the other hand, viewed CS as a technique to help them hide their lack of confidence about their pronunciation and avoid being judged by their students. Vietnamese teachers' status as well as power are important values in the culture of learning in the education system in Vietnam (Le & Phan, 2013); therefore, it was understandable why these experienced teachers disliked their students' judgements and resorted to CS to prevent them. It seemed that CS might be "unfortunate and regrettable but necessary" (Macaro, 2005, p. 68) to Vietnamese EFL teachers.

Apart from those findings, it was worth noting that Vietnamese student teachers in this study were not certain about whether or when it is appropriate to use CS in their L2 class-rooms. One assumption is that they did not receive training on CS use during their practicum or in their teacher education programmes; therefore, their awareness of CS use, which is considered essential (Bahous et al., 2014), seemed to be inadequate.

The results of this study, however, should be interpreted with caution. Firstly, it was a small-scale study with a limited number of participants, so the results were just tentative and exploratory. Second, this study just showed teachers' and experienced teachers' beliefs about the use of CS, so it was not yet clear how CS was used in practice. Studies that observe their real practice in EFL classrooms can help confirm and evaluate their beliefs.

Conclusion

This study examined the perspectives of student teachers and experienced teachers toward CS in EFL classrooms in Vietnam. Through the use of semi-structured interviews with a total of fourteen Vietnamese student teachers and experienced high school teachers, the results showed that both these student teachers and experienced teachers held positive attitudes toward CS in EFL classrooms, considering CS beneficial to their L2 teaching and their students' L2 learning. The student teachers reported to use CS to provide explanations for grammar points or difficult concepts, to evaluate their students' comprehension, to deliver instructions, and to address their students' inappropriate behaviours. These situations were all similar to those where the experienced teachers claimed to adopt CS. The benefits of CS such as facilitating students' comprehension, accommodating students' low English proficiency levels, motivating students, and saving time were shared beliefs of both the student teachers and experienced teachers in this study. Furthermore, the student teachers believed that their use of CS could help them handle their own stress and anxiety in giving instructions while the experienced teachers admitted that using CS could help them cope with their lack of confidence about their pronunciation and avoid students' judgements.

Pedagogical implications

This study shows that CS was perceived by both Vietnamese student teachers and experienced teachers as a useful tool for their EFL teaching and could be considered as an instructional strategy because of

its reported benefits and functions. Moreover, this study also indicated that Vietnamese EFL student teachers' awareness of CS should be improved during their practicum or teacher education programmes. EFL teacher training programmes in Vietnam should consider providing further information on CS use to help teachers better understand about it and improve their confidence in using it in their EFL classrooms.

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Appendix: Interview questions for Vietnamese EFL student teachers and experienced teachers about their perspectives on teachers' code-switching in L2 classrooms

1. What do you think about switching from English to Vietnamese in teaching English? Why?

2. In which situations do you often switch from English to Vietnamese in teaching English?

3. What do you think can be the benefits of switching from English to Vietnamese in teaching English?