

Introduction

Code-switching means using two or more languages in the same classroom interaction for teaching and communication (Lin, 2013). It often happens in Chinese EFL classrooms, where teachers and students switch between English and Chinese to explain grammar, manage tasks, or express emotion. This language alternation helps students understand better and feel more confident.

Code-switching is different from **translanguaging**. Code-switching shows a clear change from one language to another, while translanguaging means using all language resources together to make meaning (García, 2009). Translanguaging encourages bilingual speakers to use their full linguistic repertoire flexibly to communicate and learn. Recent studies (Baker, 2014; Tian & Macaro, 2012) show that code-switching is not a problem but a helpful teaching strategy. It also supports bilingual identity and localized forms of English learning in China.

Code-switching	Translanguaging
Clear boundary between languages	No clear boundary between languages
Switch between two codes	Use all resources flexibly
Example: “This is very difficult — 太难了!”	Example: “I think 这个idea很好 because it’s useful.”

Research Questions

- What communicative and pedagogical functions does code-switching serve in Chinese EFL classrooms?
- How does code-switching reflect and construct bilingual identity among teachers and students?
- What are the recent pedagogical implications of classroom code-switching in EFL contexts?

Theoretical Framework

- **Sociolinguistic Theory of Identity** (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005): Identity is constructed through language use.
- **Translanguaging Theory** (García, 2009): Bilinguals use their full linguistic knowledge as one integrated system to make meaning.

Theoretical Framework

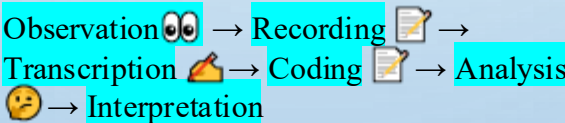
- **Functional Model of Code-switching** (Ferguson, 2003): Code-switching serves discourse functions such as topic shift, clarification, emphasis, and classroom management.
- **Updated Discourse Perspective** (Palmer, 2009): Classroom language practices are socially shaped and reflect power, culture, and identity.

This framework connects code-switching not only with language function but also with identity construction and pedagogy.

Methodology

This study uses a small **qualitative** approach, involving classroom observation and semi-structured teacher interviews. Two English lessons in a Chinese middle school were observed and recorded. The classroom talk was transcribed word by word and coded based on the framework of Sert (2005). Each time English and Chinese appeared together, it was marked as a code-switching instance.

Every example was analyzed for its communicative purpose and identity-related meaning. Teachers were interviewed about why they switched languages and how it helped students. Their views were compared with classroom data to see how code-switching supports both understanding and bilingual identity.



Pedagogical Implication

- Code-switching can help students understand lessons more easily.
- Teachers use Chinese to explain grammar and manage the class, and English for practice and evaluation.
- Alternating languages helps teachers and students construct bilingual identities.
- Code-switching reflects the *localization* of English teaching in China, showing that English is used for communication, not only for copying native speakers.

Assumptions

- Teachers should view code-switching as a useful pedagogical resource, not a weakness. It can support comprehension, maintain attention, and strengthen emotional connections. Code-switching and translanguaging together create flexible learning spaces where students use all their language knowledge to think and express meaning.
- Teacher education programs should integrate translanguaging pedagogy and encourage reflection on how language use shapes identity and learning outcomes. Future research (e.g., Palmer, 2009; Tian & Macaro, 2012) highlights that well-managed code-switching can improve classroom participation and build positive bilingual identities.

References

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