



ADAPTIVE CODE-SWITCHING IN INTERNATIONAL CLASSROOMS: SCAFFOLDING, ENGAGEMENT, AND INCLUSIVITY

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APA Citation: Mafluka., Maruf, N., & Rachmawati, D. L. (2025). Adaptive code-switching in international classrooms: scaffolding, engagement, and inclusivity. *Indonesian EFL Journal*, 11(3), 825-840. <https://doi.org/10.25134/ieflj.v11i3.101>

Received: 27-06-2025

Accepted: 21-08-2025

Published: 30-10-2025

Abstract: This study investigates teacher-student code-switching practices in English language instruction within international class programs in Indonesian high schools. Employing a mixed-methods approach, it combines quantitative classroom observations with qualitative interviews to explore patterns, frequency, and pedagogical functions of code-switching. Quantitative findings show that inter-sentential code-switching is the most frequent type, accounting for 48% of occurrences, followed by intra-sentential (38%) and tag-switching (14%). Code-switching frequency varies significantly with students' English proficiency levels ($p < 0.001$), with lower proficiency groups experiencing more frequent switches, averaging 8.5 instances per lesson during complex topic introductions. Teachers strategically employ code-switching to scaffold understanding, clarify abstract concepts, manage classrooms, and accommodate diverse linguistic backgrounds. Qualitative data reveal that both teachers and students perceive code-switching as crucial for lowering anxiety, enhancing comprehension, and increasing active participation. While students benefit from the alternate use of English and Indonesian to build confidence, they tend to prefer English-dominant instruction for greater immersion. This study advances code-switching theory by incorporating social and affective dimensions in multilingual pedagogy and underscores the need for flexible language policies that recognize code-switching as a valid instructional tool. The findings advocate for bilingual strategies in teacher training and educational policy to improve English learning outcomes in diverse international classroom settings.

Keywords: *teacher-student code-switching; English language instruction; multilingual pedagogy; language proficiency; bilingual classroom strategies.*

INTRODUCTION

English language teaching (ELT) in Indonesia occupies a pivotal role in the national education system, reflecting the country's aspirations for global engagement and socioeconomic advancement (Muhaimin, 2023; Baker, 2025; Ruane, 2025). However, empirical evidence from national and international assessment indicates substantial variability in students' academic competencies (Stanggo & Susanto, 2025; Kholif, 2025), which has important implications for English language learning contexts. Results from the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 (OECD, 2023) shows that Indonesia students obtained an average score of approximately 359 in reading literacy and 366

in mathematics, both significantly below the OECD average, placing Indonesia in the lower tier among participating countries. These outcomes point to persistent challenges in foundational literacy skills that are closely related to learners' capacity to engage with academic English.

Complementing these findings, national data from Rapor Pendidikan Indonesia, which integrates results from the National Assessment (Asesmen Nasional) and the Asesmen Kompetensi Minimum (AKM) (Kemendikdasmen, 2025) reveals that a considerable proportion of students across primary and secondary levels have not yet achieved minimum literacy competence standards, with pronounced disparities across regions and school contexts. Such uneven learning outcomes

highlight the heterogeneity of learners' academic readiness, particularly in settings where English is used as a medium of instruction. In international class programs, where students with diverse proficiency backgrounds are expected to participate in English dominant classrooms, these disparities create pedagogical challenges that necessitate adaptive instructional strategies, including the strategic use of code-switching (Hafid & Margana, 2022).

Within multilingual educational contexts, code-switching has been widely discussed as a pedagogical strategy used by teachers to mediate meaning, scaffold understanding, and manage classroom interaction. From a sociolinguistics and pedagogical perspective, code-switching is not merely a compensatory practice but can function as a strategic resource to facilitate learning, especially in contexts where learners' linguistic repertoires are uneven. Previous studies in English-Medium Instruction (EMI) settings have shown that teachers frequently alternate between English and students' first language to clarify complex concepts, provide procedural guidance, and maintain student engagement. Nevertheless, the use of code-switching in English-dominant classrooms remains theoretically contested.

Code-switching, the practice of alternating between two or more languages within a conversation or discourse, represents a prevalent and strategic linguistic phenomenon in bilingual and multilingual classrooms worldwide (Goodman, 2021; Yousif, 2025; Brdarevic, 2024; Caballero, 2022). Recent 2023-2025 scholarship reveals code-switching's evolution from mere communicative adaptation to sophisticated pedagogical orchestration. Putri (2025) documented intra-sentential dominance in Indonesian EFL classrooms for scaffolding vocabulary and instructions, while Suganda et al. (2018) identified summarization and clarification as primary functions in multilingual high school settings. Gerungan et al. (2021) extended these findings through narrative analysis, confirming affective benefits like anxiety reduction alongside cognitive support. limiting generalizability (Hakim et al., 2019).

Foundational theories anchor contemporary analysis of code-switching phenomena. Gumperz's in Gordon (2010) urges that interactional sociolinguistics framework illuminates how language alternation function as a conversational tool for managing meaning, emphasis, and turn-taking, while Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model frames code-switching as a strategic social

choice for negotiating identities and relational rights and obligations within discourse. Myers in Nicholas & Starks (2014) identifies three primary typologies namely inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching, each serving distinct pedagogical function such as clarification, emphasis, and classroom management.

Within multilingual educational contexts, code-switching has been widely discussed as a pedagogical strategy used by teachers to mediate meaning, scaffold understanding, and manage classroom interaction (Bao, 2025; Pintado Gutierrez, 2021; Hu, 2022). From a sociolinguistic and pedagogical perspective, code switching is not merely a compensatory practice but can functions as a strategic resource to facilitate learning, especially in contexts where learners' linguistic repertoires are uneven (Liu, 2022; O'Dowd, 2021; Ortiz et al, 2020). Previous studies in English-medium instruction (EMI) settings have shown that teachers frequently alternate between English and students' first language to clarify complex concepts, provide procedural guidance, and maintain student engagement. Nevertheless, the use of code-switching in English-dominant classroom remain theoretically contested.

Despite the growing body of research on code-switching in multilingual classroom, there remains a notable gap in studies that examine its pedagogical role within international class programs in Indonesia higher education, particularly from the perspective of classroom practices and instructional decision making. Few studies have explored how lecturers strategically employ code-switching to address proficiency disparities while simultaneously navigating institutional pressures to maintain English dominant instruction (Alsheikhidris, 2024; Jia, 2023; Curle, 2024). To address these aims, this study investigates teacher-student code-switching in international classrooms with two main research questions. The first, What are the patterns and frequencies of different types of teacher-student code-switching across contexts, and how do these relate to students' language proficiency levels? The second, How do teachers and students perceive the pedagogical functions and social significance of code-switching within these international classroom environments? Correspondingly, the objectives are to quantify code-switching patterns and contextual influences to provide a broad overview of its use and to explore stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes to gain an in-depth understanding of its pedagogical and social roles. Together, these research questions

and objectives aim to produce a comprehensive picture of code-switching practices that can guide improved teaching strategies in multilingual, multicultural settings.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate teacher–student code-switching in English language teaching within international class programs. The quantitative component involved systematic observation and frequency analysis of code-switching occurrences, while the qualitative component comprised semi-structured interviews with both teachers and students to explore their perceptions and social meanings associated with code-switching. This approach allows for comprehensive analysis of both patterns and stakeholder insights, addressing the study’s two main research questions.

The participants for this study were 12 English language teachers and approximately 180 students recruited from six high schools operating International Class Programs within Gresik Regency, East Java, Indonesia. This geographical setting was deliberately chosen as it provides a representative context reflective of the challenges and diverse implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in regional international programs, which often impacts teacher–student code-switching practices.

The student body comprised individuals typically aged 15 to 18 years, actively enrolled in the respective international class streams. Linguistically, while Bahasa Indonesia serves as the primary language of instruction and social interaction, the vast majority of students are also native speakers of Javanese, making their L1 background fundamentally multilingual. The student participants were selected to ensure a range of English proficiency levels, from beginner to intermediate, to accurately examine how code-switching frequency might vary with language competence.

The selection of all participants both students and teachers was conducted using a purposive sampling strategy. We acknowledge the potential limitations of non-probability sampling, particularly concerning generalizability and selection bias. However, this technique was methodologically necessary and superior to random sampling given the specialized, context-bound nature of the research objectives. The strict selection criteria were designed to guarantee information richness and contextual relevance:

Teacher Criteria. The 12 participating teachers were required to be actively teaching English within the International Class Program and possess a minimum of three years of pedagogical experience in bilingual or international settings to ensure they had developed established code-switching strategies. The average teaching experience among the selected group was 7 years. This focus ensured that only experienced practitioners whose decisions were deeply informed by context and curriculum were included.

Context-Specificity and Rich Data. Purposive sampling was essential for specifically targeting the unique dynamics of code-switching within these specialized International Class settings. By ensuring that every participant met the necessary criteria (e.g., relevant proficiency level, specific teaching context, strategic use of code-switching), the method maximized the quality and depth of data directly relevant to answering the research questions regarding patterns, frequency, and pedagogical function, thereby minimizing the risk of including uninformative subjects.

While 180 students participated across the 36 observed classroom sessions, the unit of analysis for quantitative frequency comparisons was the individual instructional session ($N = 24$). This decision was made because code-switching data were aggregated at the session level to examine classroom-level pedagogical patterns, and because students within sessions represent nested, non-independent observations. Of the 36 total sessions recorded, 12 were excluded from the proficiency-level ANOVA due to mixed proficiency groupings within the same session ($n = 8$) or incomplete video data ($n = 4$). The final sample for proficiency comparisons consisted of 24 sessions, with 8 sessions per proficiency level (Low: $n = 8$; Intermediate: $n = 8$; High: $n = 8$), taught by 12 teachers across 6 schools.

The data collection in this mixed-methods study employed three primary instruments to capture both quantitative patterns and qualitative perceptions of code-switching:

Observation Protocols and Video Recordings (Quantitative Data): Systematic observation was conducted across multiple classroom sessions to objectively document the natural occurrences, types (inter-sentential, intra-sentential, tag-switching), and frequency of teacher–student code-switching behaviors. Classroom interactions were captured using video recordings. The subsequent transcription of this video data utilized established analytical frameworks by Gumperz (1982) and

Myers-Scotton (1993) to meticulously code and categorize the code-switching types.

Semi-Structured Interview Guides (Qualitative Data): These guides were used for audio-recorded interviews with selected teachers and students to elicit rich narratives regarding their perceptions, motivations, and pedagogical/social understandings of code-switching. The questions were open-ended, designed to explore teachers' strategic choices and beliefs, and students' experiences and attitudes toward the practice, ensuring an in-depth exploration from multiple stakeholder perspectives.

Protocol Manuals and Checklists (Data Collection Protocols): These internal documents ensured consistency, accuracy, and minimized observer effects throughout the data collection process.

Prior to data collection, all research instruments underwent systematic validation procedures to ensure content validity and cultural

appropriateness. The semi-structured interview guides were reviewed by three external experts: (1) an applied linguist specializing in code-switching research, (2) an experienced EFL teacher with over 10 years in Indonesian international programs, and (3) a qualitative research methodologist. Based on expert judgement feedback, several questions were rephrased for improved clarity, and two additional items were incorporated to better capture teachers' negotiation of institutional language policies. The observation protocol and coding taxonomy were pilot-tested across two classroom sessions not included in the final sample and reviewed by two applied linguistics specialists, resulting in refined operational definitions for inter-sentential and intra-sentential switches. For quantitative coding reliability, two independent coders analyzed 20% of the transcribe data, achieving a Cohen's Kappa coefficient of $\kappa=0.85$, indicating substantial inter-rater agreement beyond chance.

Table 1. *Stages of research procedures*

Stage	Description	Data Sources	Instruments	Sample Size
Ethical Approval	Obtained from relevant institutional review boards to ensure compliance with research ethics standards.	Institutional review boards	Ethics approval documents	N/A
Informed Consent	Secured from all participants prior to data collection to ensure voluntary participation and ethical compliance.	Teachers Students	Consent forms	180 students. 12 teachers
Classroom Observations	Systematic observations conducted across multiple classroom sessions to document teacher–student code-switching behaviors, categorized by type and function.	Classroom interaction videos	Observation protocols. Video recordings	Multiple sessions per class
Interviews	Conducted confidentially following observations to explore participant perspectives on code-switching.	Interview transcripts	Semi-structured interview guides	12 teachers Selected students
Data Collection Protocols	Strict protocols implemented to maintain accuracy, consistency, and minimize observer effects throughout the research process.	All collected data	Protocol manuals. checklists	All participants
Data Analysis	Qualitative thematic analysis conducted using NVivo to identify patterns in code-switching. Quantitative descriptive statistics for frequency analysis	Transcripts Coded videos	NVivo software SPSS/statistical tools	All collected data

The quantitative data in this study were derived from the systematic observation and subsequent verbatim transcription of classroom interactions, totaling 36 instructional sessions (six sessions per school) across the six selected International Class

Programs. This phase focused on rigorously quantifying the frequency and identifying the types of teacher and student code-switching that occurred during English language instruction.

To ensure transparency and replicability, the coding procedure was executed through a meticulous, multi-step process. First, all video recordings were transcribed verbatim, generating a textual corpus that captured all teacher and student utterances. The transcripts were then segmented into utterance units to allow for precise identification and analysis of code-switching events. Next, every instance of code-switching (a shift from English to Bahasa Indonesia or the local language) was identified and systematically classified using a modified taxonomy based on the frameworks by Myers-Scotton (1993) and Gumperz (1982). The three primary categories of code-switching recorded were: Inter-Sentential Switching (switches occurring between sentence boundaries), Intra-Sentential Switching (switches occurring within a single sentence boundary, often involving embedded words or phrases), and Tag-Switching (the insertion of discourse markers or tags like "kan," "ya," or "lho"). Finally, the frequencies of each type of code-switching were counted per lesson and normalized to allow for reliable cross-comparison across different classrooms and student proficiency levels.

To address the critical issue of reliability and to guarantee the objectivity of the data, the coding process involved two independent coders. The second coder was extensively trained on the identical coding schema and taxonomy used by the primary researcher. Inter-rater reliability was assessed on a randomly selected subset of 20% of the total transcripts. The level of agreement between the two coders was calculated using Cohen's Kappa (κ) coefficient. The resulting score was (κ) = 0.85.

This score indicates a Substantial level of agreement, confirming the high reliability and consistency of the coding procedures and categorization used in this study. This detailed reporting ensures the objectivity of the quantitative data and allows for the replication of the coding process by future researchers.

Qualitative data were collected through audio-recorded semi-structured interviews conducted with purposively selected teachers and students following classroom observations. These interviews employed open-ended questions designed to elicit rich, descriptive narratives about participants' perceptions, motivations, and pedagogical understandings of code-switching in the classroom. For example, teachers were asked to reflect on their choices of when and why to switch languages during instruction, how they perceive the social and educational roles of code-switching,

and their beliefs about its effects on student learning and classroom management. Students were encouraged to share their experiences and attitudes toward code-switching practices. The interview protocol allowed participants to elaborate freely, ensuring in-depth exploration of the phenomenon from multiple stakeholder perspectives.

All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized to protect confidentiality. The qualitative data were then triangulated with classroom observations and quantitative coding of recorded interactions to provide a comprehensive understanding of both the measurable patterns of code-switching and the contextualized meanings ascribed to it by participants. This approach ensured a rich, nuanced dataset that captures both the practical and experiential dimensions of code-switching in international English language classrooms. These interviews employed the validated semi-structured guides described above, with audio-recorded protocols ensuring consistent delivery of expert-reviewed questions.

Quantitative data analysis began with the application of descriptive statistics to provide a clear overview of the frequency and patterns of different types of code-switching, inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching, across various classroom contexts and student English proficiency levels. Measures such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated to summarize the occurrence and distribution of code-switching behaviors. These analyses helped identify dominant patterns and variability between different groups and settings. To ensure statistical rigor, the analysis also included inferential statistics such as chi-square tests or analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine whether differences in code-switching frequencies were statistically significant across subgroups. All quantitative analyses were conducted using SPSS Version 28 software, ensuring standardized processing and replicability. The inclusion of these quantitative methods provided objective, systematic measurement of code-switching phenomena in classroom interactions.

Qualitative data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, facilitating a rich, in-depth exploration of the meanings and pedagogical implications ascribed to code-switching by teachers and students. The process began with familiarization, involving multiple readings of interview transcripts and

observational notes to immerse the researcher in the data. Subsequently, open coding was performed to systematically label segments of text related to pedagogical utility, cognitive scaffolding, social identity, and classroom management functions of code-switching. These codes were then organized into broader themes that reflected recurring ideas and insights across participants. Thematic maps and memos were used to refine and validate the themes, ensuring they were grounded in the data and conceptually coherent. Qualitative data coding and organization were facilitated using NVivo 14 software, enhancing efficiency and thoroughness. To strengthen the validity of the findings, triangulation was employed by cross-referencing themes with observational data and quantitative results, highlighting convergences and discrepancies. This integrative approach ensured that the qualitative analysis provided nuanced, contextualized understanding complementing the quantitative findings.

Together, the integration of quantitative and qualitative analysis methods provided comprehensive, multifaceted evidence addressing the research questions, combining statistical rigor with interpretive depth to illuminate the complexities of teacher–student code-switching in international English language classrooms.

This study strictly adhered to ethical principles to ensure the protection and dignity of all participants throughout the research process. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review boards prior to data collection, ensuring compliance with established research ethics standards. Informed consent was secured from all participating teachers and students after fully informing them about the study’s purpose, procedures, potential risks, benefits, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Participants’ privacy and confidentiality were rigorously protected. All personally identifiable information was anonymized in transcripts and

reports, and data were stored securely with access limited to the research team. The study took special care to respect cultural norms and linguistic identities of participants, recognizing the importance of fostering an inclusive and respectful research environment. Additionally, the research process was conducted with sensitivity to power dynamics inherent in educational settings to avoid any undue influence or coercion.

The ethical approach extended to transparent communication and collaborative engagement. Participants were informed about how findings would be used and shared, and efforts were made to disseminate results in accessible forms to contribute constructively to the educational community. In all respects, the research upheld principles of respect, beneficence, and justice, aligning with best practices for ethical research in language education contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RQ#1: What are the patterns and frequencies of different types of teacher–student code-switching across contexts, and how do these relate to students’ language proficiency levels?

Patterns of teacher–student code-switching

Table 2 presents table summarizes the main types and frequencies of teacher–student code-switching observed across international class programs. Inter-sentential code-switching is the most frequent, constituting nearly half of all instances, and is typically used for transitions, explanations, or when emphasizing important ideas. Intra-sentential code-switching often appears when teachers or students insert a word or phrase from another language for clarification or to illustrate a concept, making up just over one-third of the instances. Tag-switching is the least common, used mostly at the end of sentences to affirm or check understanding, highlighting its role in interactive classroom discourse. This distribution reflects the functional and adaptive ways code-switching supports instruction, classroom management, and learner comprehension.

Table 2. Types and frequencies of teacher–student code-switching observed

Type of Code-Switching	Percentage of Total	Description / Most Common Usage Contexts
Inter-sentential	48%	Switching languages between sentences, mainly during instructional transitions, explanations, and emphasis of key learning points
Intra-sentential	38%	Switching within a sentence (words or phrases inserted from another language), typically for clarification or giving examples
Tag-switching	14%	Use of discourse tags or short particles (e.g., <i>ya</i> , <i>kamu paham?</i>) for affirmation or comprehension checks

Patterns of teacher–student code-switching

The analysis illustrated in Figure 1 demonstrates the frequency with which teacher–student code-switching occurred across various instructional contexts. The highest frequencies, averaging 8.5 code-switches per lesson, were consistently observed during Complex Topic Introductions, highlighting the primary use of code-switching as a linguistic scaffold to facilitate comprehension of new or challenging material. Group Work Instructions & Feedback also saw a similarly high average frequency of 7 instances, mainly used by teachers to provide clear, actionable instructions and specific task feedback. Code-switching was

moderately frequent during Classroom Management and Discipline moments (averaging 4–5 instances, visually represented as 4.5), reflecting its quick effectiveness for ensuring engagement and order. In stark contrast, Student-Directed Activities and Peer Discussions showed the lowest frequency (estimated at 1 instance), as the activities predominantly utilized English, with switches reserved only for resolving significant comprehension gaps. This distribution clearly underscores code-switching’s purposive instructional and managerial roles, concentrated in settings that demand maximum clarity and guidance.

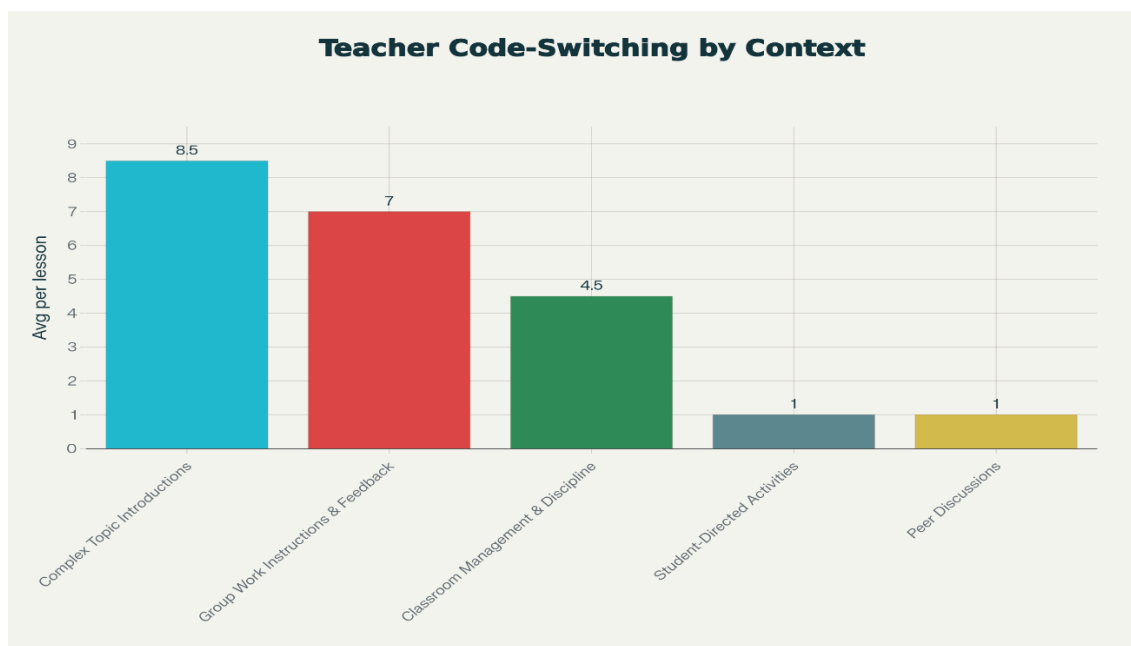


Figure 1. *Teacher code-switching by context*

Relationship to student’s proficiency levels

The ANOVA table shows in table 3 below shows that an F value of 11.29, with 2 degrees of freedom for the group comparison and 21 degrees of freedom within groups, resulting in a p value less than 0.001. This means there is a statistically significant difference in code-switching frequency across the different student proficiency groups,

indicating that English proficiency strongly influences how often code-switching occurs in the classroom. Further comparisons using follow-up group difference tests confirmed that all three groups had significantly different mean code-switching frequencies from each other, with the largest distinction observed between the lower-intermediate and high proficiency classes.

Table 3. *Code-switching frequency differences across student english proficiency groups*

Source	df (degrees of freedom)	F Value	p Value
Between Groups	2	11.29	<0.001
Within Groups	21		
Total	23		

These quantitative findings demonstrate that teachers systematically adjust code-switching frequency based on student proficiency, with the most dramatic reductions occurring as students transition from intermediate to high proficiency

levels. The following qualitative analysis explores how teachers and students perceive and justify these adaptive code-switching practices, providing deeper insight into the pedagogical decision-making processes behind these statistical patterns

RQ 2. How do teachers and students perceive the pedagogical functions and social significance of code-switching within these international classroom environments?

Thematic analysis of teacher perceptions

Pedagogical scaffolding and clarification

A consistently identified reason for teacher code-switching was its use as a pedagogical scaffold, particularly to clarify instructional content or bridge understanding across languages. Teachers reported that switching between English and Bahasa Indonesia helped students grasp abstract or complex concepts. One teacher noted, Excerpts 1: “I always switch to Indonesian when my students seem confused by instructions or new grammar points. It helps them understand faster and prevents frustration.” (Teacher #1). Such switches were most frequent during topic introductions and moments requiring explanation of key ideas.

In addition, several teachers noted that this strategic switching allowed them to reinforce key points by repeating or rephrasing ideas in students’ first language, which enhanced retention and engagement. As one participant detailed, Excerpts 2: “Sometimes I explain a new term first in English, then repeat it in Indonesian to make sure nobody gets lost. This two-step approach works especially well with abstract topics.” (Teacher #3).

Supporting classroom management and engagement

A consistently identified reason for teacher code-switching was its use as a pedagogical scaffold, particularly to clarify instructional content or bridge understanding across languages. Teachers reported that switching between English and Bahasa Indonesia helped students grasp abstract or complex concepts, especially when the textbook language felt “too dense” or when students’ limited English proficiency risked shutting down participation. Rather than translating word-for-word, teachers typically paraphrased the idea in Indonesian, checked for nods or verbal confirmation, then immediately restated the point in English to reinforce form–meaning mapping. These switches were most frequent during topic introductions, the unpacking of key ideas, and whenever comprehension checks revealed blank stares or hesitant replies. Excerpt 3: “I always switch to Indonesian when my students seem confused by instructions or new grammar points. It helps them understand faster and prevents frustration.” (Teacher #1). Excerpt 4: “Yesterday I was teaching the difference between ‘say’ and ‘tell’. I gave two examples in English, but they still

looked lost. So I said, “*Coba perhatikan: “say” itu seperti kamu berdiri di depan kelas dan kamu mengucapkan sesuatu, sedangkan “tell” itu kamu memberi informasi langsung ke seseorang.*” “In ten seconds the whole class nodded, and we could go back to the practice tasks in English without anyone giving up.” (Teacher #4).

Adaptation to student proficiency levels

Many teachers articulated that the frequency and depth of code-switching were strongly adapted to student proficiency levels. Teachers indicated that learners with lower English proficiency benefited from more frequent switches, particularly when the lesson involved complex or abstract topics, to prevent misunderstanding and keep students engaged. As one teacher explained, Excerpt 5: “For beginner classes, I repeat key instructions and explain ideas in Indonesian much more often, while intermediate groups hardly need this unless someone specifically asks for help in Indonesian.” (Teacher #7).

This differentiation ensured that each group’s language support was responsive to their abilities and learning needs.

Moreover, our findings indicate that as students’ English proficiency levels increased, the classroom environment naturally shifted toward greater use of the target language for communication, with code-switching reserved primarily for specific functions such as clarification of complex concepts or rapid classroom management. This targeted adjustment was rigorously validated by the quantitative results, which demonstrated a statistically significant inverse association between proficiency level and the frequency of code-switching in observed lessons ($p < 0.001$).

While this pattern generally reinforces established literature (e.g., Macaro, 2011; Cook, 2001) regarding code-switching as a strategic scaffold for lower-proficiency learners, our study unveils a unique contextual mechanism specific to Indonesian International Class Programs under the *Merdeka Curriculum*. The qualitative data specifically show that the *Merdeka Curriculum’s* emphasis on student autonomy and project-based learning compels teachers to be highly adaptive. Teachers reported consciously reducing code-switching not just based on proficiency, but specifically to comply with the curriculum’s mandate to foster independence. This suggests the pedagogical function of code-switching is not solely governed by psycholinguistic factors (proficiency) but is significantly shaped by top-

down policy implementation and curriculum design.

Furthermore, our finding that code-switching usage persists even among high-proficiency students, albeit at a minimal rate and for highly specialized functions (e.g., discussing highly technical or nuanced cultural concepts), contradicts earlier monolithic views that suggest code-switching should vanish completely at advanced levels. This persistence implies that for multilingual learners in this context, code-switching evolves from a survival strategy to a sophisticated communication tool, a form of translanguaging, used to express complex identity or epistemic ambiguity. This interpretation extends the current discourse by framing code-switching not as a deficit-based remediation but as a complex, evolving linguistic resource dictated by specific curricular demands and learners' developing metacognitive awareness.

Fostering learner confidence and reducing anxiety
Teachers emphasized the important role of code-switching in fostering a supportive, low-anxiety learning environment, particularly for students who were hesitant to communicate in English or came from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Strategic shifts between languages were repeatedly described as meaning-making opportunities that opened channels for participation and built learner confidence. This approach was especially effective among early-stage learners, relieving communicative pressure and encouraging them to engage more openly. One teacher said, Excerpt 6: *"When students hesitate to ask questions in English, I reassure them by explaining first in Indonesian, then transition to English. This opens up communication and builds their confidence."* (Teacher #3). Another teacher added, Excerpt 7: *"I notice more students join discussions after I switch languages, their anxiety drops and they share more ideas."* (Teacher #1)

These practices highlight how using learners' first language can mitigate fear, facilitate classroom interactions, and enhance the willingness to participate, a finding echoed throughout classroom observations and teacher interviews.

Negotiating curriculum demands and institutional policy

Some teachers described a balancing act between institutional expectations of English-only immersion and the practical need to ensure comprehension and inclusive participation in their

classrooms. While curricular guidelines often stressed maintaining maximum English use, teachers reported that moderate code-switching was necessary for clarifying instructions, maintaining lesson pace, or supporting students who struggled with understanding. This practice was often context-specific, with teachers exercising discretion to avoid excessive reliance on students' first language, thus maintaining the integrity of immersion goals.

As summarized by one teacher, Excerpt 8: *"The curriculum pushes for English use, but I sometimes switch when policy allows, so my students don't fall behind."* (Teacher #5). Another teacher remarked, Excerpt 9: *"We are reminded to keep lessons in English, but when students look lost, I give short explanations in Indonesian, otherwise, some will simply give up or stop listening."* (Teacher #5). These comments reflect a recurring tension: teachers recognize the long-term benefits of sustained English exposure yet perceive selective code-switching as indispensable for nurturing equitable and effective learning environments. This pragmatic adaptation underscores how policy ideals and classroom realities must be negotiated to support learner outcomes without undermining curricular standards.

Thematic analysis of student perceptions

Relief and comprehension through code-switching
Students repeatedly highlighted that code-switching provided immediate relief and enabled deeper comprehension when navigating difficult content or instructions in English. The practice was especially valued during moments of linguistic overload, allowing students to regain focus and avoid disengagement. Students noted that code-switching "rescued" their understanding, particularly during complex lessons or when key concepts were introduced, which prevented them from falling behind or losing interest in classroom activities.

In addition, students described this alternation between English and Bahasa Indonesia as a cognitive bridge:

Excerpt 10: *"When the teacher uses Indonesian for a difficult topic, I can catch up quickly and am less afraid of making mistakes because I know what is expected,"* (Student #2) explained another respondent. Such comments reinforce the idea that code-switching is not merely a convenience, but a powerful pedagogical strategy for scaffolding meaning and supporting academic success in multilingual classes.

Encouragement of participation and reduced anxiety

Students consistently reported that code-switching reduced their classroom anxiety and led to more active and confident participation. The ability to express questions or thoughts in Indonesian especially when feeling unsure, meant they were “less afraid of making mistakes” in front of peers and teachers. This increased linguistic flexibility allowed students to take risks during discussions and respond to prompts they might otherwise have ignored, accelerating both their engagement and their language learning. Notably, this dynamic was repeatedly highlighted by lower-proficiency students, for whom opportunities to code-switch often spelled the difference between remaining silent and contributing to the lesson.

An additional student reflected, Excerpt 11: “When the teacher lets me answer in Indonesian at first, I become more comfortable and can try to explain my ideas in English next.” (Student #4) This testimonial illustrates how code-switching acts as a bridge towards fuller participation, supporting students as they gradually build the confidence to communicate in the target language. The data thus show code-switching is essential not only for reducing anxiety but also for empowering students to embrace new communicative challenges in multilingual classrooms.

This reduction in anxiety and encouragement of participation facilitated by code-switching has been linked to improved measurable learning outcomes, such as increased oral contributions, higher test scores, and enhanced retention of target language content. When students feel secure enough to engage actively, they practice language skills more frequently and demonstrate greater advancement in comprehension and communicative competence over time.

Perceived balance and preference for english exposure

Students expressed a nuanced perspective on code-switching, valuing it as a reassuring strategy for clarity and support, especially in difficult lessons, while simultaneously advocating for increased English exposure to maximize language development as their proficiency grew. Many students conveyed that having code-switching available as a “safety net” allowed them to navigate challenging content without excessive stress, but they preferred that English remain dominant to promote immersion and active skill-building. One student remarked, Excerpt 12: “It’s good when the teacher explains in English first and only switches

if we really don’t understand, this way, we learn more but don’t get too stressed.” (Student #4). This preference underscores a delicate balance where code-switching functions as a strategic tool rather than a habitual crutch, enabling students to gain confidence while being pushed toward greater English language use. The reflections reveal that effective pedagogy respects student comfort yet prioritizes progressive exposure, tailoring language use to optimize both comprehension and communicative competence development.

Sense of inclusion and respect for diversity

Students expressed that code-switching by teachers fostered a strong sense of inclusion and respect for the classroom’s diverse linguistic and cultural makeup. They felt acknowledged and valued when educators integrated their home languages into instruction, which bridged gaps in comprehension as well as cultural connection. Multiple students emphasized this, with one noting, Excerpt 13: “I feel the teacher understands us more when she switches to our language. It makes everyone feel included, not just those who are best at English.” (Student #7). This perspective highlights how code-switching functions as a culturally responsive practice that validates students’ identities and promotes equity in diverse classrooms. By embracing linguistic diversity, teachers create a welcoming environment that fosters social belonging and academic motivation, essential components for effective language learning in multicultural settings.

The results revealed that inter-sentential code-switching predominates during instructional transitions, while intra-sentential and tag-switching support clarification and engagement. Importantly, code-switching frequency was modulated by students’ English proficiency levels, highlighting its adaptive role in scaffolding comprehension and reducing learner anxiety (Fajardo, 2024; Liu Y. , 2023; Gonzales, Wilkinson Daniel Wong, 2025). These findings align with and extend established code-switching theories, such as Gumperz’s (1982) interactional functions and Myers-Scotton’s (1993) Markedness Model, by confirming the syntactic distribution and social motivations under varied classroom demands. Moreover, they contribute to the literature by illustrating how code-switching fosters inclusive linguistically diverse classrooms, a factor essential in globalized education contexts that previous research has underemphasized (Saeed Abdullah Alzahrani et al, 2025; Pun, Fu & Cheung, 2024; Munawaroh, 2022).

This study's main findings both corroborate and extend the insights from prior research on teacher-student code-switching in EFL classrooms, particularly addressing gaps identified in studies by Lin (2021) and Huang and Li (2018). Lin's qualitative study in Taiwanese EFL classrooms emphasized teacher motivations for code-switching but overlooked learner perspectives and lacked a large, longitudinal sample, thus limiting holistic understanding and generalizability. Similarly, Huang and Li's mixed-methods research in Chinese bilingual classrooms focused heavily on quantitative survey data from teachers, which constrained the depth of contextual insights and underrepresented the social and affective dimensions of code-switching. In contrast, the present study's use of a robust mixed-methods design combining systematic quantitative frequency analysis with qualitative interviews of both teachers and students captures a fuller picture of how code-switching operates pedagogically and socially (Bauer-Marschallinger, 2023; Chen, 2020; Safarli, 2025). This study uniquely demonstrates how code-switching frequency varies significantly with student proficiency, evidencing teachers' adaptive language strategies, while also outlining learners' positive perceptions of code-switching in reducing anxiety and fostering inclusivity. Thus, it addresses the call for broader multi-stakeholder perspectives and contextualized analysis, providing more comprehensive and generalizable findings that highlight code-switching as a strategically calibrated practice essential for effective multilingual and multicultural English instruction.

The broader implications of this study underscore code-switching's dual role as both instructional scaffolding and culturally responsive pedagogy, advocating for educators and policymakers to recognize strategic language alternation as a legitimate pedagogical tool rather than a deficiency (Bassi, 2021; Khaghaninejad, 2024; Akbulut, 2024). Teachers' strategic modulation of code-switching according to proficiency not only aligns with communicative language teaching principles but also supports learner confidence and participation (Ghaderi, 2024; Magdato, 2023; Jose G. Tan, 2024), essential for effective multilingual education (Chitiga, 2021; Baca, 2023; Mary, 2024).

Practically, these insights indicate the need for more targeted professional development in which teacher training programs explicitly model and practice bilingual classroom strategies. Trainers should demonstrate structured use of L1 for

introducing complex grammatical concepts, clarifying task instructions, and managing classroom behavior while maintaining English as the primary medium of interaction. Programs should also develop documented code-switching protocols that specify when L1 use is pedagogically appropriate, such as during initial concept explanations, group-work clarifications, or behavior management, versus when English-only interaction should be maintained.

At the institutional policy level, schools should establish clear, implementable guidelines that define specific linguistic contexts where code-switching is acceptable and where it should be restricted, with concrete examples tailored to different proficiency levels. These policies must include monitoring mechanisms like classroom observation checklists and peer review protocols to ensure consistent implementation, alongside ongoing support through regular professional learning communities. In these communities, teachers can collaboratively discuss challenging code-switching situations and refine practices, thereby balancing immersion program goals with teachers' pragmatic need for flexible language use that enhances comprehension and classroom management without undermining English proficiency development.

Balanced reflection upon methodology acknowledges the rigorous mixed-methods design combining quantitative frequency analysis and qualitative thematic exploration as a significant strength ensuring depth and validity. Nonetheless, limitations include the purposive sampling confined to specific Indonesian international classrooms, limiting generalizability, and the observational design which precludes causal claims. Future research should consider longitudinal and larger-scale studies across diverse contexts to validate and extend these findings.

In summary, this study advances understanding of code-switching by integrating empirical evidence with theoretical frameworks and practical considerations, presenting a nuanced and contextually grounded perspective with implications for teaching practice and language policy in multilingual educational environments. It contributes a valuable multidimensional viewpoint to the evolving discourse on bilingual pedagogy and international English language instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the patterns and pedagogical functions of teacher-student code-switching in international English language

teaching classrooms. The core empirical findings reveal that inter-sentential code-switching predominates during instructional transitions, supported by intra-sentential and tag-switching for clarification and engagement, with frequency significantly modulated by students' English proficiency levels. Teachers adapt their language alternation strategically to scaffold understanding, reduce learner anxiety, and foster an inclusive, culturally responsive classroom environment. These nuanced insights address previous research gaps by incorporating multi-stakeholder perspectives and combining quantitative and qualitative data for comprehensive analysis.

Theoretically, this study extends established code-switching frameworks by integrating key theories such as Gumperz's (1982) interactional functions of code-switching and Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model with the social and affective dimensions of multilingual pedagogy. Gumperz's model, which highlights how code-switching functions as a conversational tool to manage meaning, emphasis, and turn-taking, is reflected in the predominance of inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching observed in instructional transitions and clarifications. Meanwhile, the Markedness Model explains code-switching as a strategic social choice where speakers navigate rights and obligations (RO sets) by selecting "marked" or "unmarked" language forms to negotiate identities and relationships. This study provides empirical evidence supporting various types of code-switching identified by Myers-Scotton, unmarked, sequential unmarked, and marked code-switching, demonstrating how these forms function distinctly within classroom interactions to scaffold learning and manage social dynamics. Further, by incorporating affective factors such as learner anxiety and confidence, this research expands these frameworks to emphasize the role of code-switching in fostering inclusive, supportive environments essential for effective language acquisition in diverse classrooms.

Practically, the findings validate code-switching as a legitimate pedagogical tool rather than a communicative deficiency. This underscores the need for teacher training programs and policy frameworks to recognize and incorporate bilingual instructional strategies that flexibly balance language immersion goals with contextualized language use. By aligning theory with classroom realities, the study advocates for education systems that empower teachers to strategically deploy code-switching to enhance learner comprehension, participation, and socio-

emotional well-being, ultimately improving multilingual teaching efficacy.

The implications stress the importance of recognizing code-switching not as a deficiency but as a vital pedagogical scaffold that supports learner confidence, participation, and equity in multilingual education. Educators and policymakers are encouraged to embrace strategic code-switching to enhance engagement and learning outcomes, particularly in increasingly globalized and linguistically diverse educational settings.

The study's key limitation lies in the purposive sampling within specific Indonesian international classrooms, which may limit generalizability to other contexts. Future research should employ longitudinal designs with larger, more diverse samples to validate and extend these findings.

In conclusion, this research provides a descriptive and context-sensitive understanding of the adaptive and multifaceted roles of teacher-student code-switching in bilingual pedagogy. The study confirms the practical significance of strategic code-switching as a valuable tool for managing classroom communication and supporting learner comprehension. By documenting these roles within specific educational contexts, the findings offer useful insights that reinforce the importance of recognizing linguistic diversity in efforts to enhance inclusive and effective English language education globally.

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Adaptive code-switching in international classrooms: scaffolding, engagement, and inclusivity