

Tertiary Level Teachers' Beliefs about Codeswitching

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Abstract : Code switching, which can be described as the use of students' first language in second language classrooms, has long been a controversial topic in the area of language teaching and second language acquisition. While this has been widely investigated across different contexts, little empirical research has been undertaken in Vietnam. The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of bilingual discourse and code switching practices in content and language integrated classrooms, which has significant implications for language teaching and learning in general and in particular for language pedagogy at tertiary level in Vietnam. This study examines the accounts the teachers articulated for their code switching practices in content-based Business English in Vietnam. Data were collected from five teachers through the use of stimulated recall interviews facilitated by the video data to garner the teachers' cognitive reflection, and allowed them to vocalise the motivations behind their code switching behaviour in particular contexts. The literature has recommended that when participants are provided with a large amount of stimuli or cues, they will experience an original situation again in their imagination with great accuracy. This technique can also provide a valuable "insider" perspective on the phenomenon under investigation which complements the researcher's "outsider" observation. This can create a relaxed atmosphere during the interview process, which in turn promotes the collection of rich and diverse data. Also, participants can be empowered by this technique as they can raise their own concerns and discuss instances which they find important or interesting. The data generated through this study were analysed using a constant comparative approach. The study found that the teachers indicated their support for the use of code switching in their pedagogical practices. Particularly, as a pedagogical resource, the teachers saw code switching to the L1 playing a key role in facilitating the students' comprehension of both content knowledge and the target language. They believed the use of the L1 accommodates the students' current language competence and content knowledge. They also expressed positive opinions about the role that code switching plays in stimulating students' schematic language and content knowledge, encouraging retention and interest in learning and promoting a positive affective environment in the classroom. The teachers perceived that their use of code switching to the L1 helps them meet the students' language needs and prepares them for their study in subsequent courses and addresses functional needs so that students can cope with English language use outside the classroom. Several factors shaped the teachers' perceptions of their code switching practices, including their accumulated teaching experience, their previous experience as language learners, their theoretical understanding of language teaching and learning, and their knowledge of the teaching context. Code switching was a typical phenomenon in the observed classes and was supported by the teachers in certain contexts. This study reinforces the call in the literature to recognise this practice as a useful instructional resource.

Keywords : codeswitching, language teaching, teacher beliefs, tertiary level

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