

Learners' Perceptions of Tertiary Level Teachers' Code Switching: A Vietnamese Perspective

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Abstract : The literature on language teaching and second language acquisition has been largely driven by monolingual ideology with a common assumption that a second language (L2) is best taught and learned in the L2 only. The current study challenges this assumption by reporting learners' positive perceptions of tertiary level teachers' code switching practices in Vietnam. The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of code switching practices in language classrooms from a learners' perspective. Data were collected from student participants who were working towards a Bachelor degree in English within the English for Business Communication stream through the use of focus group interviews. The literature has documented that this method of interviewing has a number of distinct advantages over individual student interviews. For instance, group interactions generated by focus groups create a more natural environment than that of an individual interview because they include a range of communicative processes in which each individual may influence or be influenced by others - as they are in their real life. The process of interaction provides the opportunity to obtain the meanings and answers to a problem that are "socially constructed rather than individually created" leading to the capture of real-life data. The distinct feature of group interaction offered by this technique makes it a powerful means of obtaining deeper and richer data than those from individual interviews. The data generated through this study were analysed using a constant comparative approach. Overall, the students expressed positive views of this practice indicating that it is a useful teaching strategy. Teacher code switching was seen as a learning resource and a source supporting language output. This practice was perceived to promote student comprehension and to aid the learning of content and target language knowledge. This practice was also believed to scaffold the students' language production in different contexts. However, the students indicated their preference for teacher code switching to be constrained, as extensive use was believed to negatively impact on their L2 learning and trigger cognitive reliance on the L1 for L2 learning. The students also perceived that when the L1 was used to a great extent, their ability to develop as autonomous learners was negatively impacted. This study found that teacher code switching was supported in certain contexts by learners, thus suggesting that there is a need for the widespread assumption about the monolingual teaching approach to be re-considered.

Keywords : codeswitching, L1 use, L2 teaching, learners' perception

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