

أثر استخدام التناوب اللغوي على اكتساب اللغة الإنجليزية في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية

The Impact of Using Code-Switching on English Language Acquisition in English Classrooms at the Faculty of Education

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الملخص:

رَكَّزَت هذه الدراسة على بحث أثر التناوب اللغوي على تفاعل الطلاب وفهمهم في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية التربية، جامعة مصراتة. وقد استُخدم تصميم بحثي مختلط المنهج، مع غلبة المنهج الكمي. جُمعت البيانات من خلال استبيان مُهيكل وُزِعَ على 48 طالبًا جامعيًا من مختلف المستويات الأكاديمية. وكشفت النتائج أن الطلاب عمومًا لديهم مواقف إيجابية تجاه استخدام التناوب اللغوي، لا سيما لتوضيح المفردات الصعبة والقواعد والتعليمات الصفية. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن الاستخدام الاستراتيجي للتناوب اللغوي يُمكن أن يدعم التفاعل والفهم، بينما ينبغي تجنب الإفراط في استخدامه، خاصةً في فصول المستويات المتقدمة.

The Impact of Using Code-Switching on English Language Acquisition in English Classrooms at the Faculty of Education

الكلمات المفتاحية: التبديل اللغوي، الموقف الإيجابي، التعليمات الصفية، المشاركة.

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the impact of code-switching on students' engagement and comprehension in English language classrooms at the English Department, Faculty of Education, Misrata University. A mixed-methods research design with a dominant quantitative approach was employed. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 48 undergraduate students of English across different academic levels at the faculty of education, Misurata University. The findings reveal that students generally hold positive attitudes toward the use of code-switching, particularly for clarifying difficult vocabulary, grammar, and classroom instructions. The study concludes that strategic use of code-switching can support engagement and comprehension, while excessive use should be avoided, especially in advanced-level classes.

Key words: code-switching, positive attitude, classroom instructions, engagement

1. Introduction

In the field of education, code-switching (CS) is a widely observed phenomenon, especially in communities which have two or more distinct languages. CS is a communicative resource which enables learners to accomplish a range of social and educational objectives (Auer, 2013).

In classrooms, CS is defined as the alternation between two or more languages within the same discourse. It has a significant role in facilitating understanding and maintaining student participation (Adriosh & Razi, 2019). Teachers and students often resort to switching languages from the target language to the learners' First Language (L1) for the sake of clarifying the complex grammatical items, classroom management, or lowering affective barriers (Macaro, 2001; Muysken, 2000). In the Libyan English Foreign Language (EFL) context, research shows that Arabic is employed occasionally by teachers for pedagogical functions such as clarification, repetition, and recapitulation (Adriosh & Razi, 2019) and that teachers hold positive beliefs towards CS practices (Zekri, 2022). Recent studies (Haq et al., 2025) show similar patterns in EFL classrooms elsewhere.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although CS is widely practiced in Libyan EFL classrooms, little empirical research has examined its direct impact on student engagement and comprehension at the national (pre-university) level. Uncertainty remains about the optimal frequency and functions of CS: whether it supports learners' comprehension and boosts engagement or whether it reduces exposure to the target language and hinders Second Language (L2) development when overused (Macaro, 2001; Poplack, 1980). Globally, however, there is growing recognition that CS can be a pedagogical tool (Lauta & Estremera, 2025).

Therefore, this research seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How does the use of code-Switching affect students' engagement and comprehension in English department classrooms at the Faculty of Education, Misrata University?
- 2) What are the students' attitudes toward the use of code-switching In EFL classrooms at the Faculty of Education, Misrata University?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate the impact of CS on the students' engagement and comprehension at the English department, faculty of education, Misrata University. It also aims to identify the students' attitudes toward the use of code-switching in EFL classroom at the Faculty of Education, Misurata University.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that the use of CS in the classroom may lead to the following:

- (1) Increased student engagement in their learning.
- (2) Improved comprehension of the instructional content.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study could be beneficial to different stakeholders in education in clear and practical ways:

a. Benefits for Teachers. This study could be a source of information for the English teachers about how to use First Language (L1) in EFL classrooms for effective learning outcomes. It enables them to use code-switching strategically to explain difficult concepts, give instructions, or manage the classrooms. This could facilitate their teaching process.

b. Benefits for Students. Using the second language in the class all the time can cause difficulties to the students, so this research could help

them to support better comprehension and learning, especially when dealing with complex or abstract ideas. The use of the first language in a limited time and place may have a positive effect on them, because if it is used all the time students may face difficulties in learning the second language.

The Future Researchers. This study could help the researchers to discover a lot of socio-psychological aspects of EFL teaching. It may also serve as future reference for researchers on the subject of EFL teaching and learning.

The Administrators. This research can be beneficial to the administrators and curriculum developers to understand the needs and attitudes of the students regarding the use of their L1. The teaching techniques emerged from the recommendations of the participant teachers may bring about a qualitative change in the approach towards L1 use in EFL classes.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

The study is limited to the students of English at the Faculty of Education, Misrata University in Libya. It focuses on engagement and comprehension outcomes and uses quantitative methods; hence, findings will be contextually rich but not statistically generalizable.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definitions and Theoretical Perspectives

CS denotes the alternation between language varieties during discourse and can be categorized as intersentential, intrasentential, or tag switching (Poplack, 1980; Muysken, 2000). Sociolinguistic frameworks (Hall & Cook, 2014) and interactionist approaches explain how switching manages classroom interaction and meaning negotiation. Pedagogical perspectives consider CS as scaffolding that can lower the affective filter and facilitate comprehension (Krashen, 1982; Macaro, 2001).

2.2 Using the L1

All English learners come into the classroom with at least one other language, their mother tongue (often called L1). Therefore, the teacher should consider whether it is suitable to use L1 in the classroom when the primary goal is to ultimately learn L2 (in this case English).

The initial thing to remember is that students, especially beginners, intend to translate what is happening into their L1 whether teacher want them or not. It is a natural learning process of a foreign language. On the other side, the English class should have English, and as much as possible,

there should be an English environment in a room where English is audible and utilized as long as possible.

Consequently, it is advisable for teachers to use English in the classroom as much as possible. Moreover, they should not spend a long time talking in the students' L1 for better learning (Harmer, 2010).

2.3 L1 and the Student

The belief, shared by numerous educational institutions, that English is best taught through English alone is not shared by all learners of the language. Indeed, surveys of learners' attitudes towards the use of L 1 in their classes orderly show that a majority approve of some L 1 use, particularly the case with lower-level students.

According to Tang (2002), students' attitudes towards learning L2 greatly impact their learning experiences as well as the quantity and the purposes of their L1 use in the classrooms. Students who are forced to learn a language do not identify with or find to be relevant will be more likely to overuse L 1 to stay within their area of comfort. On the other hand, if students feel that their home language is a valuable part of the language learning process, they are less likely to feel resentful about learning a second language.

2.4 Empirical Studies in Libya and the Region

Adriosh and Razi (2019) conducted an ethnographic study in Libyan university EFL classrooms and reported that CS is used by teachers and students for functions like clarification, repetition, recapitulation, and socialization, with generally positive attitudes. In a similar vein, Zekri (2022) found that Libyan university teachers believe CS helps classroom instruction, managing classroom behavior, and interpersonal relations. Abdulhady (2024) examined non-Arabic speaking educators at University of Benghazi, revealing that tag-switching (a type of CS) is common and plays a role in creating inclusive environments and improving interaction. Another study in primary schools in Sebha indicates that translanguaging (alternation of L1 and L2) is spontaneously practiced and is viewed favorably by both teachers and pupils (Aboushala & Amarif, 2024). Moreover, a study by Elashhab (2018) on reading instruction in Libyan fifth and seventh grade settings shows attitudes of teachers toward English reading and indicates difficulties related to comprehension when instructional strategies do not sufficiently scaffold through known languages. Additionally, Ahmad (2019) explored CS in a diasporic Libyan

preschool girl and identified functions such as social interaction, language development, and maintaining identity.

2.5 International Empirical Studies

Beyond Libya, Rengur et al. (2025) reported that CS serves both as a tool for comprehension and a potential hindrance to fluency in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Haq et al. (2025) explored CS practices in EFL undergraduate classrooms, finding it supports negotiation of meaning and comprehension. Lautu and Estremera (2025) performed a systematic literature review highlighting benefits and challenges of CS for second language acquisition. Wahyuningrum and Zahiidah (2025) examined CS in virtual ELT classrooms, indicating that teacher discourse switching shapes students' engagement online. Al-Marzouki and Albeyali (2025) investigated functions of CS among EFL lecturers and undergraduate students in Saudi Arabia, highlighting its affective and instructional roles.

2.6 Effects on Comprehension

Research across EFL contexts indicates that used strategically, CS facilitates comprehension of complex items (vocabulary, grammar) and reduces cognitive load for lower-proficiency learners (Adriosh & Razi, 2019; Macaro, 2001; Cook, 2001; Rengur et al., 2025). However, excessive L1 use can reduce L2 input and practice opportunities, potentially slowing oral fluency development (Muysken, 2000; Poplack, 1980).

2.7 Effects on Engagement

Studies suggest CS may increase student engagement by lowering anxiety, encouraging participation, and fostering a supportive classroom climate (Zekri, 2022; Aboushala & Amarif, 2024; Wahyuningrum & Zahiidah, 2025). In Arab EFL contexts, teacher-initiated switches often invite student responses and clarify expectations, thereby promoting behavioral and cognitive engagement (Adriosh & Razi, 2019; Al-Marzouki & Albeyali, 2025).

2.8 Gaps in the Literature

Key gaps include a paucity of observational research at the national school level in Libya, limited comparative analyses of different types/frequencies of switching, and scarcity of studies linking CS directly to measurable changes in comprehension during live lessons. This study aims to address these gaps by focusing on national school classrooms.

3. Research Methodology

This section presents the methodology used in conducting the present study. It describes the research design, participants, research instrument, data collection procedures, and data analysis. The purpose of this chapter is to explain how the study was carried out in order to explore the impact of code-switching on students' engagement and comprehension in the English Department at Misrata University.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design with a dominant quantitative approach. The quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale to measure students' attitudes toward code-switching (Likert, 1932). In addition, qualitative insights were obtained from open-ended questionnaire responses, allowing students to express their opinions freely. This research design enabled the researchers to obtain both numerical trends and deeper insights into students' perceptions of code-switching and its impact on engagement and comprehension.

3.2 participants of the Study

The participants of the study consisted of (48) students at the English Department, Faculty of Education in Misrata University. The students were randomly selected from different levels and semesters. This sampling method ensured representation of diverse proficiency levels and provided reliable data for analysis.

3.3 Research Instrument

This study depended mainly on a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to gather data about students' attitudes and experiences toward the use of code-switching in English language classrooms. It consisted of number of questions, with two types of questions, closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions include a number of options, such as agree, neutral, and disagree, and open-ended questions allowed the students to express their opinions freely. Combining the two types of questions allowed the researchers to collect quantitative and qualitative data.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher personally distributed the questionnaire to the participants in the English Department at Misrata University. The purpose of the study was explained clearly to all students before they completed the questionnaire. The participants were assured that their answers would be

The Impact of Using Code-Switching on English Language Acquisition in English Classrooms at the Faculty of Education

used for academic purposes only and that their identities would remain anonymous. The questionnaires were collected on the same day after completion to ensure a high response rate.

3.5 Data Analysis

After collecting the data, the researchers organized and analyzed the responses. The closed-ended questions were analyzed using simple percentages to identify the general trends in students' attitudes. Meanwhile, the open-ended responses were analyzed qualitatively to identify common themes and opinions about code-switching and its effects on engagement and comprehension.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The study respected all research ethics. Participation was voluntary, and no student was forced to take part in the study. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research and gave their consent before completing the questionnaire. Confidentiality was maintained, and no personal information was disclosed in the report.

4. Results and Discussion

The researcher here describes the findings of this study which conveyed the main aim of this research. The data of the study were analyzed through a five-point Likert scale. The results were presented in tables, and two figures were then introduced to enhance clarity.

4.1 Measurement Scale Used in the Questionnaire

The five-point Likert scale was used to measure the attitudes of the sample members toward the questionnaire items. The rating levels were defined according to the following table:

Table (1): Description of Likert Scale Ratings and Their Weighted Ranges

Response Level	Value	Weighted Range
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00 – 1.79
Disagree	2	1.80 – 2.59
Neutral	3	2.60 – 3.39
Agree	4	3.40 – 4.19
Strongly Agree	5	4.20 – 5.00

This table provides a clear framework for interpreting respondents' attitudes based on their Likert scale selections. By assigning weighted ranges to each response level, the researcher can quantitatively assess the degree of agreement or disagreement with each item. This approach enhances the reliability of statistical analysis and supports meaningful comparisons across variables. The use of five distinct categories also allows for nuanced insights into participant perceptions, rather than forcing binary choices.

4.2 Research Population

The research population consists of all students enrolled in the educational institution under study, who are expected to be influenced by the use of code-switching in the classroom. This population includes students across different semesters and academic levels, which allows the findings to be generalized more broadly within the educational environment. Selecting this population is directly linked to the research topic, as students are the group most exposed to the effects of various teaching strategies. Their opinions and experiences therefore provide the scientific foundation for evaluating the effectiveness of code-switching in enhancing engagement and comprehension.

4.3 Research Sample

The research sample was purposefully selected from the study population, comprising 48 students distributed across several semesters and academic levels. Care was taken to ensure that the sample represented different levels in order to guarantee inclusiveness of the results and enable meaningful comparisons across groups. This sample provided quantitative data through the questionnaire, which allowed the researchers to conduct statistical analysis and test the hypotheses regarding the impact of code-switching on classroom engagement and comprehension.

4.4 Research Instrument

This study relied on the questionnaire as the primary tool for collecting data from the sample members. The questionnaire was carefully designed to align with the objectives and hypotheses of the research, and it included a set of items measuring students' attitudes toward the use of code-switching in the classroom. To ensure accuracy in measurement, the five-point Likert scale was employed, allowing respondents to express their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." This approach provides quantitative data that can be statistically analyzed, enhances the reliability of the results, and

supports meaningful comparisons across different variables. Furthermore, the clarity and simplicity of the items were verified to ensure precise responses that reflect the actual experiences of students in the classroom.

4.5 Demographic Variables

The study included several demographic variables that help explain the results and provide a clearer understanding of the sample's attitudes. Participants were distributed across eight semesters, with a total of 48 students, showing relatively balanced representation among different academic levels. In terms of student level, the largest proportion was in level two (39.6%), while levels one and three had nearly equal representation (29.2% each). Level four recorded the lowest proportion (2.1%). This diversity in demographic variables reflects the inclusiveness of the sample and allows for meaningful comparisons across different groups, thereby strengthening the statistical analysis and supporting the testing of the research hypotheses regarding the impact of code-switching on classroom engagement and comprehension.

The Impact of Using Code-Switching on English Language Acquisition in English Classrooms at the Faculty of Education

Table (2): the statistics related to the demographic variables of the respondents.

SEMESTER	Frequency	Percent
1	6	12.5
2	6	12.5
3	7	14.6
4	5	10
5	5	10
6	6	12.5
7	5	10
8	8	16.7
Total	48	100.0

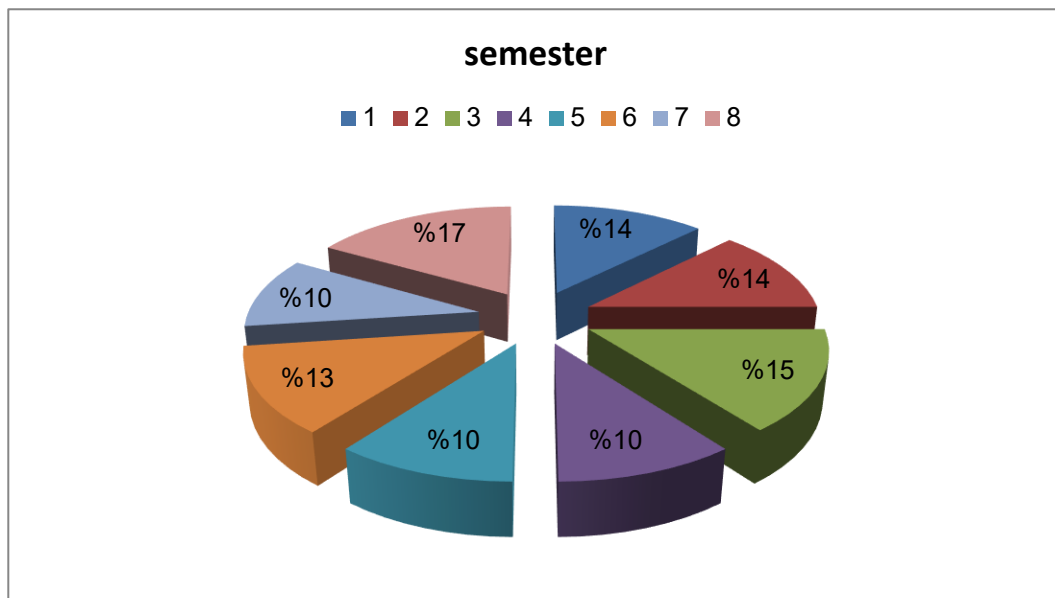


Figure 1: demographic variables of respondents

This table shows the distribution of the sample members according to semester, with a total of (48 students) spread across eight semesters. The distribution is relatively balanced, ranging between (10.4% and 16.7%), with the highest proportion in semester eight (16.7%, 8 students) and the lowest in semesters four, five, and seven (10.4% each, 5 students). This distribution indicates that the sample included all study levels in a nearly

The Impact of Using Code-Switching on English Language Acquisition in English Classrooms at the Faculty of Education

balanced manner, which strengthens the comprehensiveness of the results and allows for meaningful comparisons across semesters when testing the research hypotheses regarding the use of (CS) in the classroom and its impact on engagement and comprehension.

Table 3: the distribution of the sample members according to student level

STUDEN TLEVEL	Frequency	Percent
1	14	29
2	19	40
3	14	29
4	1	2
Total	48	100.0

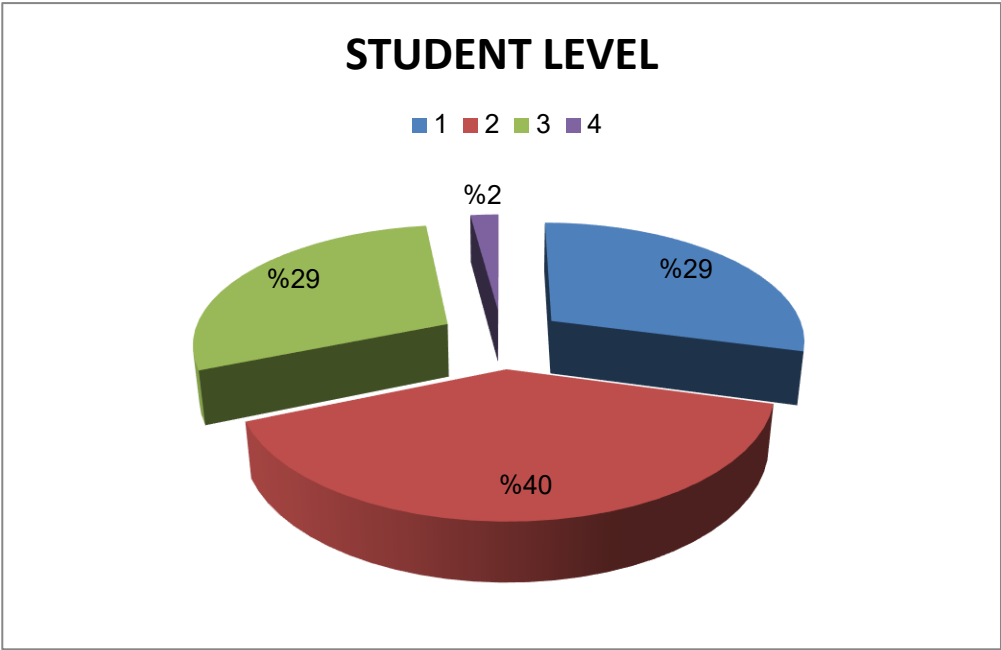


Figure 2: the distribution of the sample members according to student level

This table shows the distribution of the sample members according to student level, with a total of 48 students across four levels. The largest

The Impact of Using Code-Switching on English Language Acquisition in English Classrooms at the Faculty of Education

proportion was in level two (39.6%, 19 students), while levels one and three had nearly equal representation (29.2% each, 14 students). Level four recorded the lowest proportion (2.1%, only 1 student). This distribution indicates that the sample is concentrated mainly in the first three levels, with very limited representation of the fourth level. Therefore, the study results will primarily reflect the attitudes of students in the early and intermediate stages, which should be considered when analyzing the research hypotheses regarding the impact of using CS on engagement and comprehension.

Table 4: Mean Scores and Standard Deviations

No	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1	Code switching helps me grasp the meaning of new English words and grammatical rules more clearly.	4.10	0.805	Agree
2	When teacher uses code-switching classes room explanation become easier for me.	4.08	0.871	Agree
3	Excessive use of code-switching is unnecessary in advanced-level.	2.38	0.914	Disagree
4	Code switching helps me feel more confident when the teacher explains in both languages.	4.00	0.923	Agree
5	Teachers may use code-switching to explain difficult ideas, give instruction or understanding.	4.21	0.713	Strongly Agree
6	Code-switching sometimes weakens me in English development if used too much.	2.88	1.084	Neutral
7	Code-switching used by my teacher improves my understanding of the lesson overall.	4.04	0.833	Agree
8	Code-switching helps manage classroom behavior and interactions effectively.	4.04	0.713	Agree
9	I learn better when my teacher uses only English without switching to Arabic.	2.65	0.934	Neutral
10	Code switching encourages me to participate more actively in class	3.83	1.173	Agree

The Impact of Using Code-Switching on English Language Acquisition in English Classrooms at the Faculty of Education

	discussions.			
11	Code switching varies from one teacher to another.	4.17	0.630	Strongly Agree
12	Using too much code-switching makes the lesson feel less difficult.	2.94	1.156	Neutral
13	Code switching helps me understand difficult vocabulary and grammar more easily.	2.90	0.515	Neutral
14	Code switching makes classroom instructions clearer and easier to follow.	2.54	0.683	Neutral
15	Code switching should be avoided in advanced level English classes.	1.69	0.719	Strongly Disagree
	Total	3.36	0.332	Moderate Agreement

- The results show that students generally hold positive attitudes toward code-switching in the classroom. Items related to its benefits—such as clarifying difficult vocabulary, making instructions easier, boosting confidence, and improving overall understanding—received high mean scores (around 4.0–4.2), indicating strong agreement.
- On the other hand, statements highlighting potential drawbacks—such as weakening English development or the need to avoid code-switching in advanced classes—received lower mean scores (around 2.3–2.9), reflecting disagreement or neutrality.
- Some items scored in the **neutral range**, suggesting mixed perceptions about excessive use of code-switching or learning better with English-only instruction.
- The overall mean score (3.36) indicates a **moderate to strong agreement** with the usefulness of code-switching, confirming that most students perceive it as a supportive strategy for engagement and comprehension, while cautioning against overuse in advanced contexts.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined the impact of code-switching on English language acquisition in EFL classrooms at the Faculty of Education, Misrata University, with particular attention to students' engagement and

comprehension. The findings indicate that code-switching, when used purposefully and in a controlled manner, plays a supportive role in facilitating understanding of complex vocabulary and grammatical structures, clarifying classroom instructions, and reducing learners' anxiety. Students generally expressed positive attitudes toward the practice, perceiving it as a helpful pedagogical strategy rather than an obstacle to learning English. At the same time, the results reveal an awareness among learners of the potential negative effects of excessive reliance on the first language, especially at higher proficiency levels. Therefore, the study concludes that code-switching should not be viewed as a deficiency in EFL instruction, but rather as a pedagogical resource that, if applied judiciously, can enhance both cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning in the Libyan EFL Context.

6. Recommendations

In light of the study's findings, it is recommended that EFL teachers adopt a balanced and principled approach to code-switching, using the first language selectively to support comprehension, explain difficult concepts, and manage classroom interaction, while maintaining English as the primary medium of instruction. Teacher training programs and professional development courses should include explicit guidance on effective and strategic uses of code-switching, enabling teachers to make informed pedagogical decisions based on learners' proficiency levels and instructional objectives. Furthermore, curriculum designers and academic administrators are encouraged to acknowledge the pedagogical value of limited L1 use and to integrate flexible guidelines that reflect the realities of EFL classrooms. Finally, future research is recommended to employ observational and experimental methods, explore the long-term effects of code-switching on specific language skills, and extend investigation to different educational contexts and levels in Libya, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon

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