

Breaking the Silence: Teachers' Code-Switching as a Sociolinguistic and Pedagogical Strategy for Reducing Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety in Multilingual EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) remains a major barrier to effective communication in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, particularly in multilingual and resource-constrained contexts such as Bangladesh. This study investigates the role of teacher code-switching (CS)—the strategic use of both English (L2) and Bangla (L1)—as a pedagogical and sociolinguistic tool for reducing speaking anxiety and enhancing classroom participation. Adopting a convergent mixed-methods design, data were collected from 200 undergraduate students and 14 English instructors across seven National University-affiliated colleges in Bangladesh. Quantitative data were obtained through a modified Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), while qualitative insights were gathered via semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The findings reveal that strategic code-switching significantly reduces learners' anxiety, improves comprehension, and increases willingness to communicate. Furthermore, CS functions as an affective scaffold that lowers psychological barriers and fosters a supportive learning environment. However, excessive reliance on L1 may limit target language exposure. Based on the findings, the study proposes the S.A.F.E. Model, a balanced bilingual pedagogical framework that integrates strategic language use, affective support, and sustained exposure to English. The study contributes to the growing body of research advocating flexible multilingual pedagogies in global EFL contexts.

Keywords: Code-switching, Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety, EFL, Multilingual classrooms, Bangladesh, Sociolinguistics, Bilingual pedagogy

1. Introduction

English has emerged as a global lingua franca, playing a central role in academic, professional, and socio-economic mobility worldwide (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006). In multilingual societies, particularly in developing countries, proficiency in English is often associated with access to better educational and employment opportunities (Erling et al., 2012; Hamid, 2011). Despite its importance, learners in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts continue to struggle with speaking skills, largely due to psychological barriers such as Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

In Bangladesh, this challenge is particularly evident within the National University (NU) system, which serves a large population of students from Bangla-medium backgrounds. These learners often experience linguistic insecurity, limited exposure to English, and an examination-oriented classroom culture that discourages active communication (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Sultana, 2012). As a result, many classrooms remain characterized by silence, hesitation, and low participation.

While previous pedagogical reforms have emphasized communicative language teaching, relatively little attention has been paid to the affective dimensions of language learning. In particular, the role of classroom language practices in shaping learners' emotional experiences remains underexplored. One such practice is teacher code-switching (CS), defined as the strategic alternation between the target language (English) and the learners' first language (Bangla) (Cook, 2001; Macaro, 2005).

Although traditionally discouraged under "English-only" ideologies, recent research increasingly recognizes code-switching as a valuable pedagogical resource. It has been shown to facilitate comprehension, build rapport, and reduce learner anxiety (Ferguson, 2003; Levine, 2003). However, the role of CS in addressing FLSA, especially in large-scale public university contexts like the National University of Bangladesh, has received limited empirical attention.

This study addresses this gap by examining how teacher code-switching functions as both a sociolinguistic and pedagogical strategy to mitigate speaking anxiety in multilingual EFL classrooms. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how strategic bilingual practices can transform classroom interaction and learner engagement. In doing so, it contributes not only to the Bangladeshi context but also to broader global discussions on multilingual pedagogy and inclusive language teaching practices.

2. Literature Review

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2.1 Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA)

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) is widely recognized as a significant affective barrier in second and foreign language acquisition. Horwitz et al. (1986) conceptualize FLSA as a “distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors” associated with classroom language learning. This foundational framework was further developed by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), who demonstrated that anxiety negatively affects cognitive processing and language performance, particularly in speaking tasks.

Subsequent research has confirmed that FLSA is a global phenomenon affecting learners across diverse EFL and ESL contexts (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). In multilingual classrooms, anxiety is often intensified by limited exposure to the target language and fear of negative evaluation (Tsui, 1996). For example, Liu and Jackson (2008) found that learners frequently avoid oral participation due to communication apprehension and low self-confidence.

However, a critical limitation of much of this research is its predominant focus on individual psychological factors, often overlooking the role of classroom practices and pedagogical strategies in shaping anxiety. In the Bangladeshi context, Sultana (2012) highlights that institutional practices, such as exam-oriented teaching and teacher-centered classrooms, significantly contribute to the persistence of a “silent classroom” culture. This suggests that FLSA is not merely an individual issue but also a socially and pedagogically constructed phenomenon.

2.2 Teacher Code-Switching in EFL Classrooms

Code-switching (CS), defined as the alternation between two or more languages within discourse, has undergone a significant shift in its conceptualization within applied linguistics. Earlier perspectives often viewed CS as a sign of linguistic deficiency or pedagogical failure. However, contemporary research increasingly recognizes it as a strategic instructional resource (Cook, 2001; Macaro, 2005).

Ferguson (2003) identifies three primary pedagogical functions of teacher code-switching: facilitating curriculum access, managing classroom interaction, and building interpersonal relationships. Empirical studies across various EFL contexts support these functions, demonstrating that strategic use of L1 enhances comprehension and classroom engagement (Jingxia, 2010).

Moreover, research has begun to highlight the affective benefits of code-switching. Levine (2003) found that students reported lower anxiety levels when teachers used the first language selectively. Similarly, Littlewood and Yu (2011) argue that a balanced use of L1 and L2 supports both cognitive processing and emotional comfort, particularly for lower-proficiency learners.

Despite these positive findings, the role of CS remains contested. Critics argue that excessive reliance on L1 may reduce exposure to the target language, thereby hindering language acquisition (Turnbull, 2001). A key limitation in existing studies is the lack of clear guidelines regarding the optimal balance between L1 and L2 use, highlighting the need for context-sensitive pedagogical frameworks.

2.3 Translanguaging and Multilingual Pedagogy

The concept of translanguaging has further expanded the understanding of bilingual practices in education. Unlike traditional views of code-switching, which treat languages as separate systems, translanguaging emphasizes the fluid and dynamic use of multiple linguistic resources to construct meaning (García & Wei, 2014).

Canagarajah (2011) argues that translanguaging reflects the natural communicative practices of multilingual speakers and should be incorporated into classroom pedagogy. In EFL contexts, this approach allows learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoire, thereby enhancing both comprehension and participation.

Recent studies indicate that translanguaging practices can also reduce learner anxiety by creating a more inclusive and supportive classroom environment (Dewaele et al., 2018). However, despite its growing popularity in global research, empirical applications of translanguaging in developing country contexts, particularly in large public university systems, remain limited. This gap highlights the need for localized studies that examine how multilingual practices function in real classroom settings.

2.4 The Affective Filter Hypothesis

Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis provides a key theoretical lens for understanding the relationship between emotion and language acquisition. According to this hypothesis, affective variables such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence influence the extent to which learners can process linguistic input.

When the affective filter is high, learners are less likely to engage with the target language, resulting in reduced acquisition. Conversely, a low affective filter facilitates learning by allowing input to reach the cognitive processing system (Krashen, 1985).

While this theory has been widely supported in second language acquisition research (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014), its practical application in classroom settings remains underexplored. In particular, there is limited empirical research examining how specific pedagogical strategies—

such as teacher code-switching—can operationalize the reduction of the affective filter in real-world EFL classrooms.

2.5 Global and Contextual Perspectives on EFL Pedagogy

Globally, there has been a gradual shift from rigid monolingual teaching approaches toward more flexible multilingual pedagogies. Research conducted in Europe, East Asia, and Latin America suggests that strict “English-only” policies often fail to accommodate learners’ diverse linguistic needs (Levine, 2011).

In contrast, context-sensitive approaches that incorporate L1 strategically have been shown to improve both cognitive and affective learning outcomes (Littlewood & Yu, 2011). These findings are particularly relevant in developing countries, where learners typically have limited exposure to English outside the classroom.

However, a significant gap remains in the literature regarding large-scale public university contexts such as the National University (NU) system in Bangladesh. Most existing studies focus on private institutions or small-scale settings, limiting the generalizability of findings. Therefore, there is a pressing need for empirical research that examines how multilingual pedagogical practices function in mass education systems characterized by linguistic diversity, limited resources, and high levels of learner anxiety.

3. Rationale of the Study

The increasing global importance of English as a lingua franca has intensified the need for effective and context-sensitive language teaching practices, particularly in multilingual and developing countries (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006). In Bangladesh, English functions not only as an academic subject but also as a critical tool for socio-economic mobility, higher education, and global communication (Erling et al., 2012; Hamid, 2011). However, despite years of formal instruction, many learners—especially within the National University (NU) system—continue to demonstrate low levels of oral proficiency, largely due to psychological barriers such as Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

While educational reforms in Bangladesh have emphasized communicative language teaching, they have often overlooked the affective dimension of language learning. Learners’ emotional experiences—such as fear of making mistakes, communication apprehension, and anxiety related to peer evaluation—remain insufficiently addressed in classroom practices (Sultana, 2012; Tsui, 1996). As a result, many EFL classrooms continue to exhibit a “silent classroom” phenomenon, where students are reluctant to participate in spoken interaction.

In this context, teacher code-switching (CS) emerges as a potentially powerful yet underutilized pedagogical strategy. Traditionally discouraged under monolingual “English-only” ideologies, code-switching has often been perceived as a sign of pedagogical weakness (Turnbull, 2001). However, recent research suggests that strategic use of the first language can facilitate comprehension, enhance classroom interaction, and reduce learner anxiety (Cook, 2001; Levine, 2003; Littlewood & Yu, 2011).

Furthermore, the relevance of this study extends beyond the Bangladeshi context. Many multilingual EFL classrooms across Asia, Africa, and other developing regions face similar challenges, including limited exposure to English, high levels of anxiety, and rigid pedagogical practices (Levine, 2011). Therefore, exploring the role of code-switching in reducing FLSA has broader implications for global language education.

Another important rationale lies in bridging the gap between theoretical frameworks and classroom realities. Although theories such as Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) and Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) emphasize the importance of emotional and social factors in language learning, there is limited empirical research demonstrating how these theories can be operationalized through specific classroom practices.

Finally, in light of the growing shift toward multilingual and translanguaging pedagogies (Canagarajah, 2011; García & Wei, 2014), there is a need to re-evaluate traditional assumptions about language use in EFL classrooms. This study responds to that need by proposing a context-sensitive pedagogical framework—the S.A.F.E Model—which integrates strategic language use, affective support, and meaningful exposure to English.

Therefore, this study is both timely and necessary, as it seeks to provide empirical evidence and practical pedagogical insights that can inform language teaching practices in Bangladesh and similar multilingual EFL contexts worldwide.

4. Research Gap

Despite a growing body of research on code-switching and Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA), several critical gaps remain, particularly in multilingual EFL contexts such as Bangladesh.

First, a substantial portion of existing research on code-switching has focused primarily on its structural and linguistic dimensions, including frequency, patterns, and grammatical forms (Macaro, 2005). While these studies provide valuable insights, they often overlook the affective dimension of classroom interaction, particularly how code-switching influences learners’ anxiety, confidence, and willingness to communicate (Levine, 2003).

Second, although FLSA has been widely investigated, much of the research has been conducted in ESL or Western contexts where learners benefit from greater exposure to English (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). As a result, there is a lack of context-specific empirical studies in EFL environments, especially in developing countries where exposure to the target language is limited and reliance on L1 is high (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Third, within the Bangladeshi context, existing studies have predominantly focused on private universities or small-scale institutional settings (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). Consequently, the National University (NU) system—one of the largest tertiary education providers in the world—remains significantly under-researched. This creates a critical gap in understanding classroom dynamics in mass, multilingual, and resource-constrained educational contexts.

Fourth, there is a methodological gap in the existing literature. Many studies rely on single-method approaches, often quantitative surveys, which limit the depth of analysis. There is a lack of robust mixed-methods research that integrates quantitative measures such as the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) with qualitative insights from classroom observations and interviews (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Fifth, although concepts such as translanguaging and multilingual pedagogy have gained prominence in recent years, their empirical application in real classroom settings—particularly in South Asian EFL contexts—remains limited (Canagarajah, 2011; García & Wei, 2014).

Finally, there is a notable absence of practical, evidence-based pedagogical frameworks that guide teachers on how to use code-switching strategically without compromising target language exposure. While the benefits of CS are increasingly acknowledged, few studies move beyond description to propose actionable classroom models (Macaro, 2005).

Addressing these gaps, the present study adopts a mixed-methods approach to examine the role of teacher code-switching as both an affective and pedagogical strategy in reducing FLSA in the National University context. Furthermore, it proposes a context-sensitive framework (S.A.F.E. Model) to guide balanced bilingual pedagogy in multilingual EFL classrooms.

5. Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to explore how teacher code-switching functions as both a pedagogical and affective strategy in reducing Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) in multilingual EFL classrooms. Building on prior research that highlights the relationship between classroom language practices and learner anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; Levine, 2003), the study seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the extent to which teacher code-switching influences learners' levels of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA).
2. To identify the classroom situations in which code-switching is most effective in facilitating comprehension and easing communication-related stress.
3. To investigate how students and teachers perceive code-switching as both an instructional tool and a source of emotional support in the learning process.
4. To analyze the relationship between the frequency of teacher code-switching and learners' confidence, particularly their willingness to communicate in English (MacIntyre et al., 1998).
5. To develop a context-sensitive pedagogical framework (S.A.F.E Model) that promotes a balanced and purposeful use of both L1 and L2 in multilingual EFL classrooms.

6. Research Questions

In line with the above objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does teacher code-switching affect learners' Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) in multilingual EFL classrooms?
2. In which classroom contexts does teacher code-switching most effectively support comprehension and reduce anxiety?
3. How do students and teachers perceive the use of code-switching as a pedagogical and affective support mechanism?
4. What relationship exists between the frequency of teacher code-switching and learners' confidence, particularly their willingness to communicate in the target language?
5. How can classroom-based evidence inform the development of a balanced bilingual pedagogical model for EFL instruction?

7. Research Design and Methodology

7.1 Research Design

This study employed a **convergent parallel mixed-methods design**, which allows for the simultaneous collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This design was selected to capture both the measurable impact of teacher code-switching on Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) and the nuanced classroom experiences of learners and teachers.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enables methodological triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the results (Dörnyei, 2007). Such an approach is particularly suitable for investigating complex classroom phenomena where both statistical trends and human experiences are equally important.

7.2 Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted in seven colleges affiliated with the National University (NU) of Bangladesh, located in Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Comilla and Munshiganj regions. These institutions represent typical multilingual EFL classroom settings characterized by large class sizes, limited exposure to English, and diverse learner backgrounds.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who could provide relevant and information-rich data (Patton, 2015).

- **Student Participants (n = 200):** Undergraduate EFL learners (1st and 2nd year), aged between 19 and 23. Most participants had Bangla as their first language and limited exposure to English outside the classroom, a profile commonly associated with higher levels of language anxiety (Khan, 2015).
- **Teacher Participants (n = 14):** English instructors with teaching experience ranging from 5 to 20 years. This variation allowed the study to capture diverse pedagogical practices and perspectives on code-switching.

From a global perspective, this participant group reflects typical learners in “Expanding Circle” contexts, where English is learned as a foreign language with minimal authentic exposure (Kachru, 1992).

7.3 Data Collection Instruments

To ensure methodological rigor and triangulation, the study employed three complementary data collection instruments:

A. Quantitative Instrument: Questionnaire

A modified version of the **Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)** developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) was used to measure learners’ anxiety levels. The instrument was adapted to reflect the socio-cultural context of Bangladesh, incorporating variables such as:

- Fear of peer evaluation
- Teacher-student hierarchical distance
- Reluctance to speak in large classrooms

The questionnaire demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of approximately 0.89, indicating strong reliability (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010).

In addition, a **Code-Switching Perception Scale** was developed using a 5-point Likert scale to assess students' perceptions of teacher CS in relation to:

- Comprehension
- Comfort level
- Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

The inclusion of WTC is significant, as it is widely recognized as a key predictor of successful language acquisition (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

B. Qualitative Instrument: Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students and teachers to explore their perceptions and experiences of code-switching in the classroom. The interview protocol included open-ended questions focusing on:

- Teachers' reasons for code-switching
- Students' emotional responses
- Perceptions of English-only versus bilingual instruction

This flexible format allowed participants to express their experiences in depth, aligning with qualitative research principles that emphasize interpretive understanding (Kvale, 1996).

C. Classroom Observations

Non-participant classroom observations were conducted using a structured observation checklist adapted from communicative language teaching frameworks (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995). The observations focused on:

- Frequency of teacher code-switching
- Pedagogical triggers (e.g., grammar explanation, instruction)
- Student engagement and affective responses

This method provided ecological validity by capturing naturally occurring classroom interactions rather than relying solely on self-reported data.

7.4 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was carried out during the first semester of the 2024 academic year following institutional permission and ethical approval.

- The questionnaire was administered during regular class sessions to ensure a controlled environment and a high response rate.
- Interviews were conducted face-to-face, lasting approximately 30–45 minutes, and were audio-recorded with participants' consent.
- Classroom observations were conducted without disrupting normal teaching activities to maintain authenticity.

7.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 28). The following statistical techniques were employed:

- **Descriptive statistics** (mean, standard deviation) to assess overall anxiety levels
- **Independent samples t-test** to compare anxiety levels between groups exposed to different levels of code-switching
- **Pearson correlation analysis** to examine the relationship between code-switching frequency and learner confidence

These statistical procedures enhance the rigor and generalizability of the findings.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using **thematic analysis** following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involved:

1. Data familiarization
2. Initial coding
3. Theme identification
4. Theme review
5. Theme definition
6. Report writing

To ensure analytical rigor, the study also followed the data analysis strategies of Miles and Huberman (1994), including data reduction, data display, and conclusion verification.

7.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were strictly maintained throughout the study. All participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that their academic or professional standing would not be affected by their involvement in the study.

Pseudonyms (e.g., T1, S1) were used to protect participants' identities, in line with established ethical research standards (Bera, 2018).

8. Limitations of the study:

Although the current paper provides important information on the impact of teacher code-switching (CS) intervention on the reduction of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) in National University (NU) students in Bangladesh, it is important to consider a number of limitations.

First, the research is premised on a fairly small and geographically delimited sample, which includes 7 NU-affiliated colleges in Narayanganj, Narsingdi and Comilla areas of Bangladesh. Since the National University manages over 2,000+ affiliated colleges, the results might not be completely applicable to different institutional, socio-economic, and regional settings. The differences in the quality of teachers, classroom size and student linguistic backgrounds between rural and urban environments could yield different results. Future studies must thus take the larger-scale multi-site sampling models to improve external validity (Dornyei, 2007).

Second, the research design used is a cross-sectional study, which will measure anxiety among learners and their perception at a given time. Although the results indicate that there is a strong linkage between teacher CS and lower anxiety, they do not prove causal or longitudinal impacts. Whether a decrease in anxiety with the aid of CS will result in long-term gains in communicative competence or language proficiency is still unknown. Longitudinal studies are therefore suggested in order to study the changes of the affective gains over time and its effects on the real language results (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Third, the research is partially based on self-reported data (FLCAS and perception scales), which can be exposed to response bias, such as social desirability and recall errors. Though triangulation with interviews and classroom observations is more credible, objective performance measures (speaking tests, classroom discourse analysis, or proficiency tests) can be included in future research to increase validity.

Fourth, although the research is on code-switching by teachers, it does not closely look into peer to peer code-switching practices which are increasingly becoming central to collaborative learning and translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2011). The study of the use of L1 by students among themselves can help in gaining more information about the role of interactional dynamics, identity formation and informal learning space in EFL classrooms.

Fifth, the research fails to capture the teacher cognition and ideological stance on English-only and bilingual pedagogy. The code-switching behavior of teachers can be highly influenced by the beliefs of the teachers, their training backgrounds and institutional constraints (Borg, 2015). Future studies may employ a teacher cognition framework to examine the role of beliefs and practices in interaction in multilingual classrooms.

Lastly, the study takes place in Bangladesh, but its implications can be applied in other Expanding Circle contexts (Kachru, 1992). Nevertheless, care should be taken in the generalization of findings to other situations where linguistic ecologies are dissimilar. The role of CS in alleviating anxiety in the same EFL environments in Asia, Africa and parts of Europe could also be confirmed through comparative cross-country studies.

9. Results

9.1 Overview of Findings

The analysis of both quantitative (FLCAS survey) and qualitative (interviews and classroom observations) data reveals a clear and consistent pattern: teacher code-switching (CS) plays a significant role—both statistically and pedagogically—in alleviating Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) among National University (NU) learners in Bangladesh.

To ensure clarity and alignment with the research objectives, the findings are organized into three overarching themes:

1. The role of CS in reducing anxiety
2. The pedagogical contexts in which CS is most effective
3. Teachers' perceptions and classroom practices regarding CS

9.2 Quantitative Findings

9.2.1 Descriptive Statistics of FLCAS Responses

The results obtained from the modified Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) indicate noticeable differences in anxiety levels depending on instructional language use. Students

exposed primarily to English-only instruction reported moderate to high anxiety, whereas those in classrooms where teachers frequently employed code-switching experienced comparatively lower anxiety levels.

Interpretation

A comparison of mean scores clearly shows that learners in high CS environments ($M = 2.71$) experienced substantially less anxiety than those in low CS (English-dominant) settings ($M = 3.92$). This pattern suggests a strong inverse relationship between the frequency of teacher code-switching and students' anxiety levels.

9.2.2 Independent Samples T-Test

To determine whether the observed difference between the two groups was statistically meaningful, an independent samples t-test was conducted.

Interpretation

The test results demonstrate a highly significant difference between the groups ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the presence of teacher code-switching has a measurable and statistically significant effect on reducing students' speaking anxiety.

9.2.3 Correlation between CS and Confidence

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between the frequency of teacher code-switching and students' confidence levels.

Interpretation

The analysis reveals a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.68, p < 0.01$), indicating that increased use of L1 (Bangla) is associated with higher levels of learner confidence. In practical terms, students become more willing to participate and engage in speaking activities when supported by strategic code-switching.

9.3 Qualitative Findings

The thematic analysis of interview transcripts and classroom observations generated three dominant and recurring themes.

Theme 1: Code-Switching as an Affective Safety Net

Students consistently described code-switching as a source of emotional comfort that helped reduce fear, hesitation, and embarrassment in the classroom.

“When sir explains in Bangla, I feel relaxed. Otherwise, I become nervous and silent.” (S10)
“English-only class feels like pressure. Bangla helps me understand and speak.” (S40)

Interpretation

These responses strongly support Stephen Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis, suggesting that code-switching lowers emotional barriers and facilitates language intake by creating a psychologically safer learning environment.

Theme 2: Strategic Use of CS Enhances Comprehension

Teachers reported that they use code-switching deliberately, particularly when students struggle to grasp complex concepts.

“I switch to Bangla when students look confused. Otherwise, learning stops.” (T3)
“Grammar explanation is much clearer in Bangla.” (T7)

At the same time, teachers acknowledged the risks of excessive reliance:

“Too much L1 (Bangla) can reduce English practice.” (T5)

Classroom observations further revealed that code-switching was most frequently used in:

- Grammar explanation
- Vocabulary clarification
- Task instruction

Interpretation

This pattern closely aligns with Ferguson’s (2003) concept of “curriculum access,” where code-switching serves as a tool to make instructional content more accessible and comprehensible.

Theme 3: CS Promotes Classroom Participation

Another important finding is the clear increase in student participation when teachers strategically incorporated Bangla into instruction.

“If teacher uses only English, no one answers.” (S89)
“When teacher mixes Bangla, we try to speak.” (S102)

Observed classroom behaviors included:

- Increased student responses
- Reduced silence
- Greater peer interaction

9.4 Classroom Observation Findings

A total of 14 classroom sessions were analyzed using the COLT framework, providing insight into how code-switching functions in real teaching contexts.

Interpretation

The data indicate that the majority of code-switching (approximately 60%) occurred during academically driven activities, particularly grammar explanation and vocabulary clarification. This confirms that CS is used primarily as a pedagogical tool rather than as casual or habitual language mixing.

9.5 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The mixed-methods analysis reveals a strong convergence across all data sources:

- Quantitative findings demonstrate a significant reduction in anxiety.
- Qualitative data explain the mechanisms behind this reduction.
- Observational evidence confirms that these practices occur consistently in real classrooms.

This triangulation enhances the credibility of the findings and supports the conclusion that code-switching functions as both an affective support mechanism and a cognitive scaffold in multilingual EFL classrooms.

10. Discussion

10.1 Code-Switching as a Tool for Lowering the Affective Filter

One of the most compelling findings of this study is the significantly lower anxiety levels among students exposed to frequent teacher code-switching. This is strongly supported by both the FLCAS data and the t-test results, reinforcing Stephen Krashen’s (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis.

In the NU context, many learners come from Bangla-medium backgrounds with limited exposure to English. As a result, English-only instruction often creates a high-pressure environment, leading to silence, withdrawal, and fear of participation. Student responses such as “*I become nervous and silent*” vividly illustrate this reality.

In contrast, teacher code-switching appears to act as an affective regulator by:

- Creating a sense of psychological safety
- Reducing fear of negative evaluation
- Supporting partial comprehension

This finding aligns with Levine (2003) and further demonstrates its relevance within large, under-researched public university contexts like NU.

10.2 Code-Switching and Comprehensible Input

The findings also highlight the role of CS in enhancing comprehension, particularly when dealing with complex linguistic content. This supports Krashen’s (1985) concept of “comprehensible input” (i+1).

Teachers in this study frequently switched to Bangla when:

- Explaining grammar
- Clarifying vocabulary
- Giving instructions

Such strategic use ensures that input remains accessible rather than overwhelming. Without this support, learners may disengage due to incomprehension.

These findings are consistent with Ferguson (2003) and Jingxia (2010), but the present study adds an important dimension: comprehension is closely linked to emotional comfort. Students understand better not only because the input is clearer, but also because they feel less anxious.

10.3 Code-Switching as a Socio-cultural and Interactional Resource

From a socio-cultural perspective, the findings resonate strongly with Vygotskian theory, particularly the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In this context, code-switching functions as a form of scaffolding that enables learners to perform beyond their current linguistic competence.

In NU classrooms, CS helps:

- Bridge the gap between teacher expectations and student ability
- Connect new knowledge with existing linguistic resources
- Promote collaborative interaction

This supports Canagarajah's (2011) concept of translanguaging, where bilingual language use is viewed as a resource rather than a deficit.

10.4 Breaking the “Silent Classroom” Culture

A key contribution of this study lies in its explanation of the “silent classroom” phenomenon in Bangladeshi EFL contexts.

The findings suggest that classroom silence is not merely a result of limited ability; rather, it is deeply rooted in psychological and pedagogical factors.

Teacher code-switching helps address this issue by:

- Reducing intimidation
- Making the teacher more approachable
- Encouraging risk-taking in communication

This aligns with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) framework of Foreign Language Anxiety, particularly communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation.

10.5 Pedagogical Functions of Code-Switching in NU Context

The observational data clearly indicate that code-switching is systematic and purposeful. It's most frequent uses—grammar explanation and vocabulary clarification—underscore its role in facilitating learning.

This aligns with Ferguson's (2003) three functional categories:

1. Curriculum access
2. Classroom management
3. Interpersonal relations

In the NU context, the interpersonal dimension is especially important, as CS helps reduce social distance and foster a more supportive learning environment.

10.6 The Risk of Over-Reliance on L1

Despite its benefits, the findings also highlight a potential drawback: excessive reliance on L1 may limit exposure to English.

Teachers expressed concerns that overuse of Bangla could:

- Reduce opportunities for authentic language practice
- Encourage dependency
- Slow fluency development

This concern reflects Turnbull (2001) and reinforces the need for a balanced approach, as advocated by Macaro (2005).

10.7 Toward a Balanced Bilingual Pedagogy: The S.A.F.E. Model

Based on the findings, this study proposes a balanced pedagogical framework—the **S.A.F.E. Model**:

- **S – Strategic Use**
- **A – Affective Support**
- **F – Facilitation of Comprehension**
- **E – Exposure to English**

This model integrates insights from Krashen, Vygotsky, and translanguaging theory, offering a practical and context-sensitive approach for multilingual classrooms.

10.8 Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, the findings challenge the traditional “English-only” ideology by demonstrating that teacher code-switching can serve as a powerful pedagogical resource rather than a limitation.

When used strategically, CS acts as a bridge between:

- Anxiety and confidence
- Silence and participation
- Confusion and understanding

However, its effectiveness depends on conscious, balanced, and purposeful use. This highlights the need for:

- Teacher training
- Context-sensitive language policies
- Greater recognition of multilingual classroom realities

Importantly, these implications extend beyond Bangladesh. In many EFL contexts across Asia, Africa, and Europe, similar challenges exist. Therefore, strategic code-switching offers a globally relevant solution for reducing anxiety and enhancing learner engagement.

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