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# Code-switching in Vietnamese EFL Context: Attitudes of Vietnamese ELF Teachers, Educators, and Students

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**Abstract**

This study aims to investigate university students', teachers' and educators' attitudes toward the use of code-switching (CS) in the Vietnamese EFL context. It also measures the relationship between students' type and level of anxiety with their preferences toward CS. Participants were five teachers and educators, and 94 non-English major students from a university in Vietnam. Both quantitative (FLCAS by Horwitz et al., 1986) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews) research methods were used to gather data. Results of the interviews highlight that both teachers and students had positive attitudes toward CS, claiming CS as an effective tool. This finding was in agreement with previous research and supported the use of CS in some situations (e.g. explaining complex grammar or vocabulary; medium of instruction; checking for understanding; expressing terms with no equivalent in L1/L2; showing solidarity; disciplining students; encouraging/ aiding learning process; saving time; and aiding students with low level of English proficiency). It also highlights that avoidance of CS is impractical and a natural process in EFL context. However, the educators in this study showed different views, indicating CS may hinder students from learning L2. Results of the questionnaire survey indicate a positive correlation between students' type/level of anxiety and their preferences toward CS (r=.60). The results also reveal that students with high and moderate levels of anxiety preferred the use of CS in class to handle their test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Students with low anxiety, however, expressed negative views toward CS. Drawing upon the findings of this study, the article presents the benefits of CS in EFL context, especially for students with anxiety. It also suggests teacher training courses in Vietnam to offer supplementary advice and information about the use of CS in EFL classrooms.

**Keywords:** attitude, code-switching (CS), English as a foreign language (EFL), foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA)

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## 1. Introduction

Currently, in Vietnam, English is chosen to be a compulsory subject from Grade 3 at primary level to tertiary education. Overall, the aim is to change English from simply being a foreign language in Vietnam, to being a second language. Nguyen Thien Nhan, the Minister of Education and Training, stated in Decision No. 1400/QĐ -TTg 2008 that, by 2020, it is hoped that the majority of Vietnamese students who graduate from universities and colleges will be able to be confident enough in foreign languages, namely English, that they can increase the multicultural environments of different workplaces, working to further develop, modernise, and industrialise the country as a whole. Resolutely, many studies have been conducted with the intention of exceeding the current standard of EFL teaching and learning in Vietnam and have proven that focusing solely on the importance of gaining grammar and vocabulary skills as opposed to developing L2 communicative competence is one of the factors that reduce students' ability to become fluent in an L2 (Pham, 2005). To resolve this issue, the early 1990s saw the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Pham, 2005), which has maintained its popularity in English Language Teaching (ELT).

There are controversies within CLT, though, as many researchers believe that English should be the only language spoken during ELT classes, but Vietnamese is still widely spoken whilst teaching English (Nguyen, 2006). Specifically, according to Grant and Nguyen (2017), though using Vietnamese or CS in EFL classrooms is a common practice in schools and universities in Vietnam, many EFL teachers are still not fully aware of this phenomenon and the government still has no policy regarding this issue. As Shohamy (2006) mentioned, language education policies of each school/ university are also a noteworthy point in EFL environment. These policies shape the way of choosing which language(s) should be used in the process of teaching as well as the level of appropriateness in which using that language(s) is considered to be acceptable. Shohamy mentioned that numerous teachers and educators applied those policies without considering whether they were relevant to their students' preferences and usable in their context.

In addition, there are controversial disputes between researchers of foreign or second language (L2) learning as to whether teachers in this field should speak entirely in the L2 (Krashen, 1985; Moeller & Roberts 2013; Stern, 1992), or whether it is beneficial to switch between the first language (L1) and the L2 for optimal learning (Cook, 2001; Critchley, 2002; Macaro, 2005; Schweers, 1999). According to advocates of CS use, it is beneficial for teachers to use both L1 and L2 as it allows students to comprehend how the L2 works in relation to their L1. Omitting the use of L1 in classrooms restricts and slows the students' ability to learn the L2 (Macaro, 2001). A small number of studies have examined this controversy in Vietnamese classrooms and discovered that while it is not certain precisely how EFL students, teachers, and educators regard CS, it has been ascertained that is an extremely significant aspect of education programmes

### *1.1 Statement of the Problem*

Multiple studies, including those conducted by Kieu (2010), Nguyen (2012), Le (2014), and Grant and Nguyen (2017) suggest that a great number of Vietnamese EFL students and teachers alike support and appreciate the use of CS in L2 classes. However, there are no previous studies that explore if education boards are of the same opinion as students and teachers on the use of CS as well as investigate the relationship between students' L2 anxiety level and their preferences toward CS. It would not only be interesting for such research to be conducted, but it would also be beneficial for EFL education in Vietnam, as, according to Grant and Nguyen (2017), teachers can then be given a fully comprehensive plan on how to effectively use CS in ELT. According to Pappamihiel (2002) and Amini et al. (2018), the main focus of educators or the policymakers, in language teaching, is to enhance students' language proficiency, which makes other factors (e.g. learners' preferences and attitudes) rather neglected in the process of designing policy and developing curriculum. By finding out the answers whether there are any differences between educational staffs' belief and students' anxiety and preferences, regarding the use of CS in EFL classes, this study is hoped to shed light on further application of CS in ELT as well as teacher training and EFL teaching policies to "break with the methodologically imposed code constraint in order to use [CS] strategically to achieve [the] pedagogical aims" (Simon, 2000, p.339).

### *1.2 Research Questions*

With the aforementioned aims, the present study sought to find answers to the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1. What are students, teachers, and educators' attitudes toward CS?

RQ2. In which situations do students, teachers, and educators think, are necessary to use CS?

RQ3. Is there a correlation between students' anxiety levels and their preference toward CS?

*1.3 Research Hypothesis*

Based on the aforementioned RQ, the following hypothesis was formulated to examine RQ3:

H1. There is a positive correlation between FLA and preference toward CS of Vietnamese EFL students.

RQ1 and RQ2 were answered by analyzing descriptive data from questionnaires and interviews and did not require the development of research hypotheses.

## 2. Literature Review

*2.1 Contrasting Views on Code-Switching*

The role of L1 in the EFL context is always "one of the most long-standing controversies" among researchers all around the world (Stern, 1992, p. 279). Simon (2000) regard CS in L2 classrooms as referring to the language choice of teachers in EFL sessions, with them choosing to teach predominantly in the L2 or to incorporate the L1 as well. Cater and Nunan (2001, p. 275) also describe CS as "a phenomenon of switching from one language to another in the same discourse." There are debates around which approach has a more positive impact on L2 learning. Krashen (1985) and Moeller and Roberts (2013), for instance, propose that learning in a strict L2 only environment in ESL/EFL classrooms produces the most beneficial results as it most accurately recreates real-life scenarios. Brown (2000) agrees with this, claiming that students should most definitely be familiarised with L2 completely.

Inevitably, however, there are many researchers who believe the opposite to be true as they found no relationship between the amount of "L2 input and the academic success" of learners (Phillipson, 1992, p. 211). Macaro (2001, 2005) ascertains that it should be expected that L1 will be used in an L2 learning environment, as having an understanding of how languages differ and coincide is a useful time-saving strategy than having to explain everything on the L2. Macaro (2001, 2005) and Critchley (2002) are amongst the researchers that agree with this assertion, each claiming that utilising L1 reduces the time spent explaining L2 considerably. The use of CS in L2 lessons is important because it is completely natural for L1 to take over in genuine, real-life situations sometimes, which can be a useful learning experience (Cook, 2001). The exclusion of L1 in EFL context is considered to be rather impractical, especially for low English proficiency students (Vaezi & Mirzaei, 2007). Positive role of L1 in EFL classes, moreover, is generally supported by various researchers, claiming that using L1 in teaching foreign languages does not hinder the process of learning but, indeed, facilitates L2 acquisition (Baker, 2006; Vaezi & Mirzaei, 2007).

*2.2 Benefits of Code-Switching*

CS is useful for students, as teachers can utilise it to aid them when trying to explain challenging grammar concepts (Baker, 2006; Levine, 2003; Rezvani & Eslami-Rasekh, 2011). According to Atkinson (1987), switching between L1 and L2 provides worthwhile knowledge into the fundamental, abstract, and sociolinguistic disparities between the native and L2. Atkinson also observes that the use of L1 during discussions of language comprehension is a quick and efficient method compared to other techniques that only utilise the L2. Rezvani and Eslami-Rasekh (2011) considers the use of L1 to be an essential teaching method for clarifying difficult vocabulary and relaying instructions. Furthermore, Macaro (2001) and Rezvani and Eslami-Rasekh (2011) also ascertain that allowing the teachers to switch to L1 for singular L2 words or phrases allows them to ensure that the relevant information has been accurately received by the students.

Teachers can also use the L1 to ease any anxieties the students may have about learning an L2 (Cahyani et al., 2018). Levine (2003), Baker (2006), and Rezvani and Eslami-Rasekh (2011) point out that teachers use CS in L2 lessons for explanation and evaluation of L2 words, promoting student contribution, creating a relationship with students, and developing classroom management. Moreover, when a combination of both L1 and L2 are used in the classroom, students tend to be more eager and motivated to learn EFL as the teacher shows an understanding and appreciation of the L1 culture (Burden, 2001; Schweers, 1999). Having the ability to use both an L1 and L2 allows both teachers and students to convey their thoughts accurately, creating a comfortable learning environment that allows students to learn the L2 at their own pace (Atkinson, 1987).

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*2.3 Code-Switching in Vietnamese Schools*

As aforementioned, learning English is an important concept in Vietnam, and there are many different projects, including the National Foreign Language 2020 Project. Though English is taught as a foreign language in Vietnam, there is not a lot of research into CS in the country. Pham (2007), however, was able to identify a discrepancy between CLT beliefs and local classroom principles, arguing that English lessons function on the attitude of planting EFL learners into English society. Pham (2007) accentuates how important it is to utilise the L1 in order to help the students feel confident and at ease when studying English. EFL students tend to use their L1 often during lessons as it allows them to better comprehend the tasks they have been set. Nguyen and Ho (2012) discuss the importance of using CS so the students can involve themselves in class jokes and discussions.

Le (2014) notes that CS helps tremendously with ELT, and also argues that CS allows the lower-level students to gain a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the language. Le (2011) identifies that Vietnamese EFL teachers frequently switch to Vietnamese during their lessons to ensure that their students have an accurate understanding of the meta-language. They also tend to explain the grammatical rules of English in Vietnamese in order to prevent as much confusion as possible. Most of the teachers began by explaining the tasks in English before repeating them in Vietnamese as lower-level students are not as adept at understanding L2 grammar without L1 encouragement. In 2017, Grant and Nguyen discovered that Vietnamese EFL teachers frequently utilised CS for both academic and emotional reasons, including lesson structure and content and ensuring lower-level students do not feel intimidated.

*2.4 Foreign Language Anxiety and Its Impacts*

According to Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, feelings have a significant impact on learners' language acquisition. These affective variables consist of "motivation, self-confidence and anxiety" (Krashen, 1981, p. 23). Horwitz et al. (1986) categorise foreign language anxiety (FLA) into three different components in their questionnaire which are communication apprehension; test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Horwitz et al. (1986) believe that these components have negative impact on foreign language learning. Furthermore, there is a wide range of studies support the view that FLA may affect foreign language proficiency and performance (Chin et al., 2016; Horwitz, 2001; Matsuda & Gobel 2004) or language skills (Cheng et al., 1999; Matsuda & Gobel, 2001; Saito et al., 1999). There is no study, however, measuring and exploring the relationship between language anxiety and students' uses of CS and their attitudes toward CS in EFL classrooms.

## 3. Methodology

*3.1 Participants*

A total of 99 Vietnamese participants including 5 teachers/educators aged 27-40 and 94 students (53 females and 41 males) aged 21-22 from a university in Vietnam responded to the questionnaires. All of the teachers (all females) held bachelor degree or higher in ELT or education with more than five years of teaching experiences. The educators in this study have worked in the educational environment for more than 10 years and they are now in charge of managing educational staff and system in the university. The interviewed participants (five students and three teachers and educators) were randomly selected from EFL classes that the researcher could have access to. They were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. All of the students in this study were in their third year, majoring in IT and business administration with low B1 English level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages. They have learnt English for 12-15 years.

*3.2 Instruments*

The questionnaires in this study were adapted from the questionnaires designed by Horwitz et al. (1986) and Schweers (1999). The questionnaires were split into two sections, with the first section comprising of a series of questions that gave the researcher insight into the backgrounds of the participants. The second section was used to gather the participants' frequency of using CS and their views on the use of CS in classrooms, which the researcher then used to conclude whether CS is beneficial for Vietnamese EFL context. The data were calculated by using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (very disagree/very rarely) to 5 (very agree/very frequently) (Appendix A, B).

In order to gather information about students' level of anxiety, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986) was used. There were 33 items in the survey; each item is clearly marked, producing a range of scores from 33 to 165. The mean was calculated according to five-point Likert scale from 1 (very disagree) to 5 (very agree). However, for negative items (items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28, & 32), order of scoring is reversed so

that it would be interpreted that the higher the score one individual got, the higher anxiety this individual might experience (Appendix C). FLCAS has been tested for reliability and validity under various circumstances (i.e. different cultural groups, settings, and ages) and proved to be reliable and valid (Aida, 1994).

The internal reliability of both questionnaires using Cronbach alpha, 0.95 and 0.80 for FLCAS questionnaire and students' preferences toward CS questionnaire respectively, is considerably high. This indicates acceptable reliability for further application into the present study (Hair et al., 2010). According to Payne (2000), semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D) allow participants to have flexibility to expand on any issues they find particularly interesting, as well as introducing new topics. Thus, semi-structured interviews were employed for this study. The twenty-minute interviews were conducted in Vietnamese via Facebook. To ensure reliability, the researcher translated all of the questions into Vietnamese, distributed them to a group of both teachers and students from the English Department to be proofread and, as the questions were fully understood by the proof-readers, they were then able to be used for data collection. The data were gathered through a mixed method, including questionnaires and interviews. According to McGroarty and Zhu (1997), using more than one instrument may allow researchers to gather a more rounded picture of data and its outcomes.

*3.3 Procedure*

Two sets of questionnaires were distributed to both groups of teachers/educators and students via Google Form. Preceding the authentic execution of the questionnaires, a pilot study was conducted one week before the actual distribution of questionnaires and interviews, involving one teacher and two students from the university, to establish the validity of the questions and to detect any questions or definitions that needed to be changed to be more comprehensible. Once all of the necessary changes were made, the actual, updated questionnaires and interviews were conducted.

Then, the participants agreed to be interviewed via Facebook and were asked to give consent to allow their data to be recorded and used anonymously. Once the interviews were all complete, each of them was transcribed and then shown to the participants in order to corroborate their accuracy. This process helps to determine the credibility of a qualitative study. The participants were tasked with reading through the transcripts and making any changes they deemed necessary. Once this was complete, the transcripts and questionnaire results were translated from Vietnamese to English, coded, and then analysed thematically. The researcher generated four categories for the answers: (1) situations in which CS was used, (2) perceived advantages of using CS in EFL, (3) perceived disadvantages of using CS in EFL, and (4) the relationship between students' anxiety levels and their preferences toward CS.

## 4. **Findings**

The data gathered from the questionnaires were statistically analysed and the audio transcription collected from the semi-structured interviews were presented in four main parts as below to answer research questions.

*4.1 Vietnamese is Beneficial in Some Situations*

All of the teachers (excluding educators) and students supported the use of Vietnamese in ELT, claiming that it is an important aspect of teaching and eases the overall teaching process. The findings of the questionnaire reveal various scenarios in which Vietnamese should be utilised in ELT, with joking/small-talking to students (Appendix A-Item 10: 100.00%), explaining new/complicated vocabulary (Appendix A-Item 1: 75.00%), explaining grammar point (Appendix A-Item 2: 75.00%), and eliciting students' comprehension (Appendix A-Item 6: 75.00%) being the four most agreed upon scenarios by teachers. However, it is important to consider the contexts of each individual classroom and teacher.

> The teacher should have the autonomy to decide when it is useful to use Vietnamese. For instance, with low English proficiency students, it would likely be beneficial to explain new words and grammar in Vietnamese first, but a higher English level class would likely benefit from new words and grammar being introduced in English first, with Vietnamese explanations used only to combat possible confusion.
>
> (Thi)

The teachers also reported that CS was a great tool to draw students' attention to the differences between usage of L1 and L2 grammar and meanings (Appendix A- Item 7: 75.00%). This may assist the learning process as students may

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directly notice the variations in meanings, grammar points and even the contextual or cultural differences between L1 and L2.

> My students are very eager to learn the translation of idioms in both Vietnamese and English. One time when they learnt about idiom "to sell like hotcakes", they were very curious why that idiom was not "to sell like fresh shrimps" because they thought that was more accurate for Vietnamese. That lesson was so much fun and some students came to me after class for more idioms.
>
> (Dao)

The conclusions of the questionnaire for students also show that the participants, believe that helping students understand complex lessons better (Appendix B-Item 46: 81.91%), helping students enjoy lessons more (Appendix B-Item 47: 80.85%) and helping students bond better with their teachers (Appendix B-Item 56: 86.17%) were the top three factors for using Vietnamese in English lessons. The interviewed students gave further comments that:

> I think that it depends on the class English proficiency. If there are more students with high proficiency in class, then teacher should use more English. If it is the other case, then it should be 50-50 uses of English and Vietnamese.
>
> (Xo)

> I am always afraid that I will be slower than my classmates because I am not as good as they are, so, if teachers use Vietnamese, I can understand lessons better, especially grammar.
>
> (Na)

The teachers also expanded on their answers, with many of them stating that having to explain definitions of new words in English can be extremely time-consuming if the students do not fully understand, rendering it fruitless. It is important that students understand exactly what they are being taught, which is why using Vietnamese to explain specific details is useful:

> Speaking only English in class is tiring and time-consuming as sometimes students cannot understand what I say, especially when it comes to technical terms or grammar or when I want to focus on the different uses of some words. That is when I have to translate what I mean into Vietnamese. This takes a lot of time.
>
> (Hong)

Not only is it beneficial to speak in Vietnamese for education purposes, but it also can help the teachers show solidary with their students, partaking in jokes and personal discussions in order to create a less stressful environment and a more pleasant learning experience (Appendix A – Item 10: 100.00%). The use of Vietnamese, furthermore, can help the students to cooperate better as they know exactly what it is they are supposed to be doing, and it is also useful to give feedback in Vietnamese as it is much easier for the students to understand where exactly they are going right or wrong(Appendix A-Item 8: 50.00%):

> I only use short English phrases to praise my students so that they can understand exactly what I mean. If I give feedback for their work, then I will use nearly 100% Vietnamese as I feel that it will make my comments less harsh and make my students feel more encouraging.
>
> (Dao)

> I always code-switch when I have some small talks with my students as it makes me more approachable and friendly, comparing to using only English.
>
> (Hong)

There were a large number of both students and teachers, in this study, agreeing that CS is a useful way to help students improve their English competence as while listening to teachers' speaking, students may work out some of the new words in teachers' sentences. As a result, students may learn the usage or meaning of those words based on the context (Appendix B- Item 62: 77.66%):

> I have learnt the word "spontaneous" meaning because my teacher uses that word many times when she talks. So I think it (CS) is very helpful because I can pick up new words from my teacher without actual learning.

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(Hoang)

During interviews with teachers in this study, there was a noteworthy point mentioned by two out of five teachers. They revealed that CS was their "getaway" when they had problems regarding their pronunciation or lack of equivalents in English (Appendix A-Item12). Applying CS is an effective temporary alternative for them to handle that teaching difficulty.

> Sometimes I do not want to lose face with my students so when I am not certain with my pronunciation or I accidentally forgot a word, I will use Vietnamese because it will be embarrassing if a teacher cannot answer questions from students.

(Dao)

*4.2 The exclusion of Vietnamese in ELF classroom is impractical*

50.00% of teachers disagreed with the statement "Teacher should have zero tolerance to the use of Vietnamese" and 75.00% of them believed that using CS is natural and necessary (Appendix A). The teachers claimed that CS was part of the learning process as their students were all Vietnamese so it would be more natural for them to use Vietnamese in some cases; for example, to address behavioural problems or to discipline their students in Vietnamese.

> I think it would sound strange for me if I say something like "you are so naughty" or "you talk too much" in English as it is easier, quicker and more straightforward in Vietnamese. In most of the cases, when I used English to discipline my students, they seemed to ignore my words.

(Dao)

The students also had the same views with the teachers, regarding this issue. They claimed that:

> I do not know. Maybe because I am Vietnamese so when my teacher told me off in English, I could not fully understand her so it was not effective that much to me.

(Long)

Using CS is also reported to be an efficient method to create an encouraging learning environment for students. The teachers, in this research, believed that providing instructions in Vietnamese was more effective (Appendix A-Item 4: 50.00%) as they thought that not fully understanding instruction might lead to wrong conduct of the activities and demotivating students. To their explanation, in some cases, the amount of information in one instruction or lesson might be overwhelming for the students, therefore, it might hinder students from learning. As a result, it was more useful for them and their students, especially ones with low English proficiency, to use Vietnamese for better understanding.

> When I want my class to go smoothly, I will use Vietnamese while giving instruction or I will use English first then check students' understanding with Vietnamese.

(Thi)

> I normally ask my students to translate my instruction which is in English into Vietnamese to check their understanding. I usually ask weaker students in class to do this as I believe that if they can fully understand my instruction, they may be more confident and motivated to do the task.

(Hong)

*4.3 Vietnamese Should Not be Overused*

59.57% of the students believed that, whilst Vietnamese should be used "sometimes", it is important to ensure that the L1 is not being overused, as this can severely deny students of worthwhile L2 input. This is also in agreement with 50.00% teachers that "Vietnamese may negatively affect the standard of English" (Appendix A–Item 16). The relevant study offers proposals for the prudent use of Vietnamese in ELT, including having teachers adjust the level of Vietnamese used in lessons depending on the students' English-speaking ability and occasionally changing the format of the lessons and variety of English words that are being taught.

> It depends on my students (proficiency) but I will try my best to use only English when giving instruction because I think it may benefit them so that they can learn the usage of that grammar or vocabulary in daily

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> conversation. If my students cannot understand, I will simplify my words and use Vietnamese as my last resort.
>
> (Thi)

> If a class of students have a particularly high level of English, less Vietnamese should be used in their lessons. However, it is not a given that every student in one class will have the same level of English, so the use of Vietnamese in ELT classes is useful for students with a lower ability.
>
> (Dao).

> I think it should be 50-50 (use of Vietnamese and English) of the time because if teachers use too much Vietnamese, students will heavily rely on teachers' translation and they will not try to understand and work out the meaning themselves.
>
> (Hong)

Overall, it is clear that the use of L1 is not a universal experience throughout English lessons in Vietnam as each classroom has individual, specific factors influencing the necessity for the L1.

> In my class, I want my teacher to use less than 50% of Vietnamese only because this is an English class. We want to improve our skills and pronunciation. If teachers talk in only Vietnamese then we will learn nothing.
>
> (Thom)

One of the most beneficial findings from teachers' interviews was that teachers were unsure about the appropriate level and efficient amount of CS in class. It was reported that the use of CS was fairly random habitual response. This was considered to be overuse of Vietnamese, which might hinder the learning process of L2.

> Using Vietnamese is way faster so I, myself, overused it sometimes. I know it is not good for English classes but I am not that sure about when and where to use it.
>
> (Dao)

Lastly, the choices of educators in this study clearly indicates their preferences toward using only English in the EFL classrooms. They believed that the use of CS or Vietnamese in EFL may be a hindrance in the course of English. Educators, in this study, also agreed to some extent that teachers should use only English in teaching and have no tolerance toward the use of Vietnamese in EFL classroom as they held a belief that usage of Vietnamese may negatively affect standard of English. Due to the agreement with the educators in this study, the researcher could not conduct further interviews with them to gather more in-depth answers. However, the results from the questionnaire clearly showed their strong contrast views to those from teachers and students in this study.

*4.4 Correlation between students' anxiety level and their preferences toward CS*

4.4.1 Students' Levels of Anxiety

Table 1 shows students' level of anxiety in ELF classrooms. The results indicate that 73.40% students experienced high anxiety or tension and 22.30% had moderate anxiety while only 4.30% felt comfortable or less anxious in their English classes.

Table 1. Students' level of anxiety

| Level of anxiety | Number of students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| High anxiety | 69 | 73.40% |
| Moderate anxiety | 21 | 22.30% |
| Low anxiety | 4 | 4.30% |

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4.4.2 Language Anxiety and Students' Preferences toward CS

Table 2 gives the general statistical description of the scores in two questionnaires. The kurtosis and skewness of the variables indicate that they are normally distributed (Hair et al., 2010). Thus, correlation can be used as a mean to answer whether there is any relationship between students' level of anxiety and their preferences toward CS. The reason for fairly high kurtosis in this study (= 3.58) is due to the participant's self-selection bias as they were mostly interpreted as highly anxious learners with n = 69 (73.40%) (Table 1).

Table 2. Descriptive statistic of level of anxiety and preference toward CS

| | Mean | Mode | Standard Deviation | Kurtosis | Skewness | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level of anxiety | 124.31 | 129 | 17.58 | 3.58 | -1.77 | 62 | 148 |
| Preferences toward CS | 119 | 121 | 9.04 | 0.68 | -0.81 | 93 | 135 |

In order to investigate the relationship between students' level of anxiety and students' attitudes toward CS, the correlation coefficient of FLCAS scores and students' preferences toward CS questionnaire points was calculated according to Pearson formula. Table 3 shows that there was a significant positive relationship between the students' level of anxiety and their preferences toward CS in EFL classrooms($r$ = .60, $P$ < .01, n = 94).

Table 3. Correlation coefficient between level of anxiety and preference toward CS

| | Preferences toward CS |
|---|---|
| Level of anxiety | .60* |

Table 4 reveals that fear of negative evaluation is the main reason of students' applying CS in their English classes as the result showed a positive correlation between students' fear of negative evaluation and their preferences toward CS ($r$ = .61, $P$ < .01, n = 94). Positive correlation of test anxiety and communication apprehension with learners' preferences toward CS was also found with $r$ = .52 and $r$ = .41 respectively ($P$ < .01, n = 94), suggesting students' choices to manage stress and tension in L2 classrooms. Although they were not as significant as the data for correlation between fear of criticism and their preferences, they could still show that students used CS to deal with all three types of FLCA.

Table 4. Correlation coefficient between types of anxiety and preference toward CS of all students

| | Communication Apprehension | Test Anxiety | Fear of Negative Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Preferences toward CS | .41 | .52 | .61 |

The results in Table 5 also indicated a positive relationship between the anxieties of students with high anxiety and their preferences toward applying CS in the learning process and daily conversation ($r$ = .49, $P$ < .01, n = 69). Moreover, there was a moderate correlation between students' communication apprehension ($r$ = .37, $P$ < .05, n = 69), test anxiety ($r$ = .45, $P$ < .01, n = 69), fear of negative evaluation ($r$ = .35, $P$ < .05, n = 69), and students' preferences toward CS ($r$ = .45, $P$ < .05, n = 69). It can be concluded that highly anxious learners chose CS as a mean to handle their own stress and tension in class, especially with test anxiety.

Table 5. Correlation coefficient between anxieties of students with high level of anxiety and preference toward CS

| | Communication Apprehension | Test Anxiety | Fear of Negative Evaluation | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Preferences toward CS | .37 | .45 | .35 | .49 |

Students with moderate anxiety showed a strong preferences and attitudes toward CS as the data revealed a strong relationship between the anxieties of students with moderate anxiety and preferences toward CS ($r$ = .71, $P$ < .01, n = 21). Within the moderate anxiety group, students who were more drawn to fear of negative evaluation ($r$ = .72, $P$ < .01, n = 21) and test anxiety ($r$ = .68, $P$ < .05, n=21) significantly preferred CS, comparing to those with communication apprehension ($r$ = .36, .05 n.s., n = 21).

Table 6. Correlation coefficient between anxieties of students with moderate level of anxiety and preference toward CS

| | Communication Apprehension | Test Anxiety | Fear of Negative Evaluation | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Preferences toward CS | .36 | .68 | .72 | .71 |

Lastly, the correlation between the anxieties of students with low anxiety and preferences toward CS was not found ($r$ = -.09, .05 n.s., n = 4). There was also weak negative correlation between students' fear of negative evaluation and their preferences toward CS ($r$ = -.11, .05 n.s., n = 4), and moderate negative correlation between this group's communication apprehension, and their preferences toward CS ($r$ = -.47, .05 n.s., n = 4). However, students with low anxiety who had test-driven stress showed preferences toward CS ($r$ = .51, .05 n.s., n = 4). It could be interpreted that students who were less anxious or felt comfortable in English classes had fairly negative attitudes toward CS and its application in the learning process. However, as there were only four students that had relatively low anxiety, the findings should be noted for reference only.

Table 7. Correlation coefficient between anxieties of students with low level of anxiety and preference toward CS

| | Communication Apprehension | Test Anxiety | Fear of Negative Evaluation | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Preferences toward CS | -.47 | .51 | -.11 | -.09 |

## 5. Discussion

Regarding RQ1 "What are students, teachers, and educators' attitudes toward CS?", the results gathered from the questionnaire and interviews were similar to those of other studies where teachers and students also believed that using CS in classrooms is beneficial (Kieu, 2010; Le, 2014; Nordin et al., 2013). Participants also reported that the exclusion of L1 in L2 classroom is impractical, which is in line with Vaezi and Mirzaei's study (2007). Furthermore, more than 50.00% of the participants agreed that L1 should not be overused and the use of L1 should depend on each class or each student's situation. It is clear that the use of L1 is not a universal experience throughout EFL lessons in Vietnam as each classroom has individual, specific factors influencing the necessity for the L1. As Edstrom (2006) claimed, L1 use will be completely different from one class to the next. The views of the educators or the managing board in this study; however, were contrast to those of students and teachers. They reported to have no tolerance toward the use of L1 in EFL classrooms as it may negatively affect standard of L2. This idea is in agreement with a number of researchers' ideas favouring uses of only L2 in EFL environment (Krashen, 1985; Moeller & Roberts, 2013).

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Regarding RQ2 "In which situations do students, teachers, and educators think, are necessary to use CS?", the findings gathered from the questionnaire and interviews denote that teachers confirmed their often usage of CS during lessons, which is consistent with Grant and Nguyen's analysis (2017). The academic uses of CS that were reported by teachers support various former pieces of research into why it is useful for explaining grammar points (Levine, 2003; Nguyen, 2012; Rezvani & Eslami-Rasekh, 2011), why it is beneficial for explaining challenging concepts (Baker, 2006; Schweers, 1999), how it can be used to assist students' comprehension (Duong, 2006), how it can be used to give instructions (Baker, 2006; Rezvani & Eslami-Rasekh, 2011), how it can be used to aid those students that have a lower level of English proficiency (Bui & Vu, 2017; Le, 2011), how it can be used to show solidarity (Baker, 2006; Levine, 2003; Nguyen, 2012) and how it can be used to address any behavioural issues in the classroom (Cahyani et al., 2018; Levine, 2003; Rezvani & Eslami-Rasekh, 2011). The questionnaire also provided similar findings to previous studies that focused on the advantages of using CS, such as student motivation (Schweers, 1999), saving time in lessons (Critchley, 2002; Macaro, 2005; Rezvani & Eslami-Rasekh, 2011) and expressing words or phrases which have no equivalent in L2 (Baker, 2006; Eldridge, 1996).

This study also revealed that some teachers had confidence issues regarding their English pronunciation; therefore, they utilised CS to circumvent judgement from their students. In Vietnamese academic culture, it is important that teachers maintain a high status and level of respect from their students (Nguyen & Hall, 2016), which is why teachers use CS to prevent losing face amongst their students. The use of CS may sometimes be undesirable but completely vital (Macaro, 2005). Note-worthily, some teachers were uncertain about when it is most suitable to use CS during L2 lessons. Vietnamese teachers did not receive training about CS during their teacher education programmes (Grant & Nguyen, 2017), meaning that, although CS is often an essential aspect of L2 learning, some teachers have an inadequate understanding of it. The result also showed conflict between the positive attitudes toward CS of teachers, students and the negative views of educators.

Regarding RQ3 "Is there a correlation between students' anxiety levels and their preference toward CS?", the hypothesis was supported by the finding that there was a significant positive relationship between students' levels of anxiety and their positive attitude toward CS ($r$= .60). Students with high and moderate anxiety level showed preferences toward CS and its application in daily conversation and in-class uses. Moreover, students who felt anxious in tests or when communicating due to fear of negative evaluation reported to prefer using CS. Students with low anxiety, in contrast, showed negative attitudes toward CS. Specifically, students also reported that volunteering in EFL class was embarrassing and anxious experience (Appendix C-Item 9; 13). This finding is also similar to MacIntyre and Gardner's (1991, p.112) study describing anxious EFL students as someone "who withdraw from voluntary participation."

In this study, students also showed high level of anxiety when being called or asked to speak in class (Appendix C-Item 3; 20; 24; 31), which is in agreement with Bekleyen's (2009) findings. Due to high level of anxiety, 61.00% of students (Appendix C-Item 17) described language classes as an uncomfortable experience (Zin & Rafik-Galea, 2010). Furthermore, according to Krashen (1981), anxiety is related closely to L2 acquisition and learning. High level of anxiety may also hinder students from successful communication (Salim et al., 2017) and academic performance (Awan et al., 2010; Liu, 2006). By considering these findings from other researchers, the finding of significant positive relationship between students' level of anxiety and their preferences toward CS as well as according to interviews with students, there is an assumption that EFL students, who experience anxiety and apprehension, tend to choose CS and prefer using CS in their communication and learning process to deal with anxiety (Cahyani et al., 2018; Schweers, 1999) as well as to assist their learning in English classes.

The results of this research, however, should be interpreted with caution because although the students were asked to answer the questionnaires about English classes in general, they may have given answers based on one specific class they were attending at the time. Moreover, this study mainly focused on the participants' attitudes and beliefs; therefore, it did not show how they used CS in practice. There should be further studies to record and observe their actual use of CS in class to investigate and evaluate what type and frequency of CS is used in the EFL classrooms and its further impact on students' competence as well as their behaviours and attitudes. Lastly, the participated students mainly had low English proficiency and high anxiety level; therefore, there should be further research conducted with wider range of participants with higher level of English to explore whether the results may yield.

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## 6. Conclusion

This study utilised the instruments of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to gain insight from a total of 99 Vietnamese teachers, educators, and students on the use of CS in Vietnamese EFL classrooms. The results concluded that all of the participants viewed the use of CS positively, except for educators, claiming it to be beneficial to both L2 teaching and learning. The results also indicated a significant positive correlation between students' level of anxiety and their positive views toward CS. However, the study also revealed that teacher awareness of CS needs to be vastly developed during in-service and pre-service teacher training as the teachers had a lack of confidence about when to put CS to use or the appropriate level of using CS. The educators or the policy makers also showed different perspectives toward CS compared to positive attitudes of teachers and students. Thus, it would be valuable for teacher training courses and conferences in Vietnam to offer supplementary advice and information about the use of CS. The positive correlation between students' anxiety in ELT and their preferences toward CS shown in this study also may shed light on further application of CS in EFL environment. From that experiences, both teachers, students, and educators may improve and build a more motivating, relevant and appropriate EFL environment and help lessen students' anxiety as well as enhance their English competence which they can use for future employment in this era of globalisation.

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