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Code-Switching in English for Specific Purposes Classrooms: A Multifaceted Analysis of Students' Experiences and Perceptions

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Abstract

The goal of this mixed-method study was to investigate the varied perceptions of code-switching (CS) among English for Specific Purposes (ESP) students at Applied College of Qassim University, Saudi Arabia. The study sought to reveal the range of occurrence of CS occurring in these classrooms and then use the information gathered to inform and advocate for language education. In its convergent sequential design, the study collected quantitative data in the form of a comprehensive survey. The survey examined students' perspectives on their frequency of CS use, its appropriateness, as well as its benefits and disadvantages in the context of instructor use and student use. Qualitative data was collected concurrently through semi-structured interviews. These allowed the study to gain a better understanding of students' experiences with CS, its impact on student-teacher relationships, as well as factors that made it useful. The study results confirmed that CS was prevalent among ESP instructors of the Applied College. While most learners perceived it as very beneficial for understanding and engagement, some high-proficiency learners felt that it could interfere with higher levels of language acquisition. The results also provided a detailed picture of the practices and presented actionable, evidence-based recommendations for improving ESP teaching practices in vocational and technical education.

1. Introduction

English as a Lingua Franca has spread all over the world, playing a significant role in a

wide range of professional and academic areas, most particularly English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts. In multilingual classrooms, students may code-switch as they engage in

group discussions or interact with their tutors. Bilingual students, especially studying ESP, often find they don't understand some of the new jargons which increase the level of cognitive load and hence lead to code-switching as a solution. Some language purists have historically regarded code-switching as a sign of language deficiency or even of resistance to immersion in the target language. However, modern sociolinguistics has a very different take on the phenomenon. It is now considered a normal and functional communicative strategy among bilingual and multilingual speakers (Grosjean, 2010).

The sociolinguistic aspects of code-switching show its importance in ESP classrooms. Hymes (1972) pointed out that communicative competence goes beyond merely knowing the grammar, to involve appropriateness and suitability in various social settings. In such multilingual ESP contexts, the use of different language skills is based on students' social identities which enable them to address complex topics while maintaining cultural ties (Sert, 2015). Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) postulates that a person's identity is partly derived from the social groups to which one associates with. In ESP classrooms, code-switching serves as an identity-marker; it helps students relate and maintain their cultural connections while assimilating to their lessons (García, 2020).

In recent studies, code-switching has proven that Social Identity Theory not only alleviates academic issues but also endorses students' identities in professional discussions (Klimova, 2021). Wei and Wu (2020), for instance, found that code-switching served as a sociocultural strategy used by nursing students to negotiate their professional identity. The nurses mentioned that it was easier for them to communicate complex information with their fellow students, enhancing their understanding and interactions with the professionals in their fields. Canagarajah (2020) also revealed that code-switching is anchored on the student's social and cultural milieu, eventually fostering engagement and understanding.

In addition, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory can be used to understand the cognitive process involved with code-switching in ESP classrooms. His sociocultural theory underscores the importance of social connections through code-switching in promoting cognitive development. For instance, learners are often found to explain concepts they find difficult in their native language to better understand English vocabulary and concepts. Liu and Zhang (2021) used this theory as the foundation for their study on code-switching in ESP classrooms. The researchers found that students who resorted to code-switching had a better understanding of abstract vocabulary and technical terms. Comprehensible input by Krashen (1982) can also be used to account for the cognitive processes involved with code-switching in ESP classrooms. It postulates that code-switching concepts, especially difficult ones, are easier for students to understand, and they can also be anchored to prior knowledge (Wahhab, 2024).

Code-switching in ESP classrooms connects students' native language to their second language. Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis (1981) purports that proficiency in a student's first language has a positive impact on the acquisition of the second language. Code-switching allows students to strategically apply their first language to deconstruct difficult concepts in the second language, mostly in a multilingual context. Rivera (2022) in her recent study on bilingual engineering students revealed that the students had to resort to code-switching to negotiate complicated technical jargons and terms. Teachers who embraced the bilingual approach succeeded in not only capturing the attention of the students but also making them relate to concepts such as "thermodynamics" in an intuitive manner.

In addition, comprehensible input is a fundamental factor for effective language learning (Krashen, 1982). In the ESP context, a teacher's ability to implement code-switching can play a vital role in the successful acquisition of comprehension among students. Yang and Shu (2021) in their study revealed that teachers who embraced the idea of code-switching

between languages improved student satisfaction and the level of understanding of complex, technical-based topics. Albirini (2020) also provided findings that agree with this. The study indicated that code-switching made it easy for students to follow difficult academic language, especially in the field of engineering and science. The codeswitching episodes simplify the language allowing for improved retention and understanding of key concepts.

– Code-Switching and Student-Teacher Relationships

Positive student-teacher relationships significantly influence students' academic experiences (Pianta, 1999). It enhances student-teacher relationships by promoting an inclusive environment that values students' linguistic backgrounds (García, 2020). A quantitative study conducted by Saha (2021) found that students who reported experiencing code switching in their classes felt a stronger sense of connection to their instructors. This positive rapport established through code switching cultivates a supportive atmosphere conducive to student engagement, inquiry, and collaborative learning.

Code switching also influences feedback strategies within the ESP classroom environment. Permitting students to use their first language allows them to provide detailed and constructive feedback, fostering an atmosphere of understanding and empathy (EFL Cafe, 2025). The findings of Deltour's (2022) study further support this approach, revealing that multilingual learners value the opportunity to receive feedback in their first language. This practice not only reduces the potential for misunderstandings but also reinforces their language acquisition progress. It not only enhances their confidence but also aids them in comprehending complex subject matters.

– Classroom Context and Code-Switching

The classroom environment plays a crucial role in shaping code-switching practices and its overall effectiveness (Gumperz, 1982). Classroom characteristics, such as the cultural

and linguistic diversity of students and the language policies implemented in schools, significantly influence the dynamics of code-switching. In diverse ESP classrooms, the use of code-switching is strategic in establishing a truly collaborative learning experience (Zhang, 2021). Research by De Smet et al. (2023) in a multilingual setting reveals that code-switching among multilingual students fosters more effective peer interactions and creates a greater sense of belonging within the learning environment. This finding underscores the adaptive nature of code-switching in meeting various learning needs.

Culturally responsive teaching emphasizes the significance of integrating students' cultural backgrounds into instructional approaches (Gay, 2010). This instructional approach acknowledges the cultural diversity of students and the value of their unique experiences and perspectives (Gay, 2010). The practice of code-switching plays a pivotal role in this context, as it promotes inclusivity and ensures that students find the learning process more relevant and meaningful (López, 2021). Empirical evidence presented by Olshtain & Prestwich (2022) in their study indicates that when students perceive their first language is acknowledged and included in the educational setting through code-switching, they are more likely to actively participate and are motivated by a positive and encouraging learning environment. This, in turn, results in a more positive educational experience for the learners. It is not only supportive of the student's identity but also validating their language and culture as important elements of the learning environment.

Nazri and Kassim (2023) conducted a systematic review to determine the existing code-switching problems, patterns, and functions in popular culture. It was concluded that code-switching in most cultures had complexities, uniqueness, and impacts on communication and understanding. This study found that the most reported major problems of code-switching were identity, meaning construction, advertisement objectives, advertisement appeals, and language styles. In

the functions of code-switching, they found that referential, directive, expressive, metalinguistic, and poetic functions of code-switching were to improve speech, emotion, and solidarity. The authors suggest for future research there should be studies of code-switching in other cultures. Rayo et al. (2024) explored how bilingualism and code-switching were evaluated and measured in previous research studies on the impact on cognition. In their systematic literature review, it was mentioned that bilingualism and code-switching in research are studied differently depending on their intended usage. Some studies suggest that the measurement and evaluation of bilingualism or code-switching influences its impact on cognition. This article, in its conclusion, has reported that there was a significant difference in assessing bilingual ability and its correlation with cognition. This review demonstrates a gap in current research that bilingualism and code-switching need to be measured and understood better, with emphasis on bilingual experience as well as cultural elements. It is suggested that future research measures bilingual experiences and the culture of a person to provide a better understanding of the relationship between these factors.

Ghaderi et al. (2024) investigated English teachers' perceptions of code-switching in EFL classrooms, its functions, and teacher accommodations for students' proficiency levels. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 EFL teachers in the country of Iran. Five main code-switching functions were identified in this study, with the avoidance of misunderstandings being the most reported by these teachers. Teachers in this study were also found to code-switch at higher rates when teaching lower-proficiency students in order to clarify confusion, but at higher rates with advanced students to build rapport. Zhong et al. (2023) conducted a qualitative study of the code-switching patterns of Mandarin speakers in the People's Republic of China. Results found that the most common code-switching pattern was insertion, followed by back-flagging and alternation. Additionally, personal motivations, specifically social roles, were found to be the

main influence of code-switching in Mandarin speakers. This led the researchers to conclude that Mandarin speakers are still at an early stage in their multilingualism.

As mentioned before, in such active setting of the ESP classroom in Applied College in Qassim University, the ESP students were acquiring the vocabulary and the complex concepts that were integral parts of the desired occupation in their field of study. The use of code-switching, particularly the informal use of the instructors' first language with the students, was a somewhat common practice. The beliefs, or perceptions, of many second language learners suggested that the use of code-switching, particularly when instructors used it in the classroom, was a valuable support for the language learning process. The primary advantages usually being obtained from its use to disambiguate complex concepts, reduce cognitive load, promote feelings of comfort, and assist in the understanding of more challenging content (Al-Amri, 2017; Sert, 2005). This held as a true belief by many of the students whose English language ability would place them at the level of an intermediate language learner or below. In essence, these learners interpreted the judicious use of a commonly shared first language alongside English as a learning support of some type that can, in a moderate capacity, improve both access to the curriculum and engagement with it.

This was not the case for a few more advanced learners in this classroom environment who were more commonly found in disagreement with such language use. In these students, it was more frequent to find the opinion that a high volume of frequent and, at times, random code-switching from an instructor, could have the opposite effect and ultimately slow the language learning process (Alshahrani, 2020). For these advanced language learners, it was nearly of primary importance to gain as much time immersed in the target language as possible. The reason for this being the experience of such input, even when it may be beyond a level of full understanding, encouraged the type of output that leads to more advanced understanding, use

of independent thinking in English, and reduction of transfer from the first language. This group of students further maintained that the supports valued by other students, while perhaps useful in the intermediate stages of language learning, at best, only offered false confidence or support and, at worst, actively robbed them of full language development and independent use of English.

Due to the differing learner beliefs in this and the prevalence of such code-switching use in such multilingual classrooms, a study was clearly needed that both accurately represented code-switching use and was able to harness that understanding for the improvement of such language learning. This study aimed to understand students' perceptions of code-switching in Applied College in Qassim University in Saudi Arabia. The study attempted to provide a more detailed understanding by considering students' perspectives on the frequency and perceived appropriateness of code-switching, its impact on understanding ESP content, its role in student-instructor relationships, and the factors influencing its use. This study aimed to offer a more in-depth understanding of code-switching in such an ESP classroom that can support evidence-based teaching strategies, better language learning outcomes, and the design of more effective and inclusive ESP classrooms in similar contexts, such as vocational and technical higher education institutions.

– Research Questions

This study investigated the phenomenon of code-switching in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classrooms in the Applied College at Qassim University, with a focus on students' perceptions and experiences. The central questions of this study were to explore the relationship between language, instruction, and personal interaction and to understand how code-switching is perceived and experienced in the classroom. The research questions of this study were as follows:

1. What were the perceived frequencies and appropriateness of code-switching employed by both students themselves and

their instructors in Applied College ESP classrooms at Qassim University, as they actually occur?

2. To what extent did Applied College students at Qassim University perceive code-switching as a facilitative or inhibitory factor in their comprehension of specialized English content and overall language learning, reflecting its real impact on their academic progress?
3. How did Applied College students at Qassim University perceive the influence of code-switching on the development of rapport, comfort, and the overall relationship between students and their instructors, shaping the actual classroom dynamics?
4. Which specific classroom contextual elements (e.g., complexity of subject matter, type of learning activity, cultural references) did Applied College students at Qassim University identify as prompting or justifying the use of code-switching, in the lived experience of the classroom?
5. Were there statistically significant differences in students' perceptions of code-switching based on their demographic characteristics, such as academic specialization, year of study, or self-reported English proficiency level, among Applied College students at Qassim University, providing a clearer picture of diverse student needs?

2. Methodology

– Research Design

This study was based on convergent parallel mixed methods. This means it adopted both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative method aimed at painting a picture of students' perceptions of code-switching in the Applied College ESP classroom at Qassim University while the qualitative one was for triangulating these numerical data. The general intent was to establish a true picture of how code-switching naturally takes place in the actual ESP classrooms to suggest ways of

collecting data that may help in addressing this issue. A descriptive survey was employed to get a summary of general perceptions from a larger group of the ESP class population to supply statistical data that would indicate how code-switching occurred and how it affected them in real life. Semi-structured interviews with a small number of the ESP class members were performed to add context and also experiences. Thus, a multiple instrument mixed-methods approach to data collection and data analysis were adopted to ensure that the research was complete by ensuring a wide data pool and by searching for depth in the data that would be collected and used for data analysis. The data from the two methods were collected simultaneously and merged in the final data interpretation phase of the study.

– Participants and sampling

The target population of the present study were the undergraduate students who were actively taking English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses at the Applied College, Qassim University, Saudi Arabia. In total, there were 456 students who were taking the ESP courses, with 179 male students and 277 female students from various departments and technical/professional majors (Industrial Safety, Business, Web design, Renewable Energy, etc.).

To reach the intended research purpose and ensure that the sample adequately represented the study population and also reflected the spectrum of perceptions from the different course pathways, a stratified random sampling strategy was used for the Survey. Students from each course pathway and year of study (First or Second) (refer to Table 1 for the distribution) were selected randomly. The systematic sampling procedure was adopted for the Survey to facilitate sampling for the ESP class, as well as to create the criteria for the interview sample (see Table 1 for details).

The smaller sample for interviews was 25 students, 10 males and 15 females, from among those who completed the online Survey. This sample was a purposive one because the students were selected based on the spread of

perceptions revealed by the survey. In other words, these students were picked with an intent to ensure the sample would mirror the spread of experiences and perceptions held by the ESP students as determined by the Survey results. This approach was the best because it would not only help to narrow the focus on the real, and sometimes the messy, language use in the class but also would guarantee that the collected qualitative data would be from the students who can best represent their learning community.

The entire sample was recruited based on voluntarily deciding to participate in the study and after being assured that all responses would be kept anonymous and confidential (refer to Table 1 for details).

– Data Collection Instruments

1. **Online Survey:** An online self-administered “Perceptions of Code-Switching in ESP Classrooms” Questionnaire that was used to collect the quantitative data.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

- Section 1: Participants’ Demographic Information (gender, year of study, ESP course taken to help identify ESP class cohorts, etc.)
- Section 2: Self-Perceived English Proficiency (students’ self-rating of their English level and comfort with the language, as this was crucial in interpreting their perceptions about code-switching).
- Section 3: Perceptions of Code-Switching (five-point Likert Scale was used to get a measurement of ESP students’ perceptions of the actual frequency of code-switching (overall, instructor’s, and students’) as well as teacher effectiveness and personal preferences for/not for code-switching, and further a detailed 5-point Likert Scale items on its various perceived benefits and drawbacks). The English

version of the questionnaire was accompanied by the Arabic translation (forward translation), which was meant to ensure all participants understood the questions clearly to offer a true picture of their perceptions. A pilot test with about 20 students from the population was also done to ensure clarity and consistency in the question wording and the general reliability of the instrument.

2. **Semi-structured Interviews:** A Semi-structured Interview Schedule with open-ended questions to be used for collecting the qualitative data for the ESP students participating in the interviews. The interview questions were derived from key themes in the Questionnaire. The questions were as follows:

- a. How would you describe your personal learning experience as an ESP student, specifically relating to code-switching?
- b. Recall a recent class session where code-switching was either notably helpful or particularly unhelpful to your learning experience. Please describe the situation.
- c. In your view, how does code-switching influence the rapport between you and your instructor?
- d. Have you observed your classmates code-switching during lessons? If so, how does this affect your learning experience?
- e. If you were to provide advice to your instructor about code-switching, what would it be?
- f. In your opinion, how does code-switching impact the development of your English language proficiency?

The Interview questions were designed to be as open-ended as possible to allow the ESP students to develop their thoughts and to provide nuanced views of the real classroom code-switching, its helpful/unhelpful situations, how they perceived it in terms of

their learning experience, and their preferences. The selected students were given the option of an individual, in-person, and a recorded online interview and upon their consent, the interviews were recorded, and later, transcribed.

– Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis: The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze the responses. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means and standard deviations) were employed to summarize the ESP students' perceptions of code-switching in their class. Independent Samples t-tests and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test for statistically significant differences in perceptions of code-switching between different subgroups (male and female, by Academic specialization, First and Second Year, as well as the low, middle, and high groups in terms of their Self-perceived English Proficiency). In addition, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients were computed to assess the presence and strength of significant relationships between the perceived frequency/preference for code-switching and its reported impact on language comprehension and classroom dynamics, to provide a reality check on this practice.

Qualitative Data Analysis: Thematic analysis was done for the data transcribed from interviews with the students. The procedure involved in this analysis was (using Braun & Clarke, 2019): familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and identifying themes, and, finally, writing the report. The purpose of this phase of data analysis was to expand upon and to confirm or refute the quantitative findings as well as to offer the nuanced in-depth explanations of the real and the lived code-switching in the classroom and in the student community. Thus, the qualitative component was set to reveal any emergent themes that were possibly connected to the contextual factors and students' actual experiences that were not uncovered by the Survey.

– Ethical Considerations

The full study protocol was submitted to and received approval from the Qassim University Research Ethics Committee. Informed consent to participate was obtained from all participants. The potential participants were given a fully detailed informed consent form, which indicated the nature of the research, its purpose, the anticipated procedures, the participants' right to voluntary participation and the right to discontinue participation in the research at any time, as well as their right to receive full anonymity and confidentiality for their responses. The participants were provided with contact information of the researcher and of the Qassim University RAC in case they had any questions or concerns. All data were kept on a password-protected personal device and were not shared with anyone except the researcher.

3. Results

This section contains the results of the study. The data and information will be displayed according to the significant themes of

the research questions. The statistical result will be shown first. A brief comment on each table will be offered after the data presentation. Then, a complete summation of the qualitative data will be provided, summarized and displayed in a visualized table (through a pie chart), giving a better and more in-depth insight into the quantitative results. This combination of qualitative and quantitative data through the integrated approach will help this chapter with its purpose, establishing a frame of reference for the analysis of the findings, as well as for the demonstration of its direct compliance with the research questions, as well as to the overall purposes of this study.

The demographic information of the study participants will be summarized in the following table (Table 1). It offers a concise overview of the background characteristics of the students who completed the survey, thereby providing a foundational understanding of the sample's composition; and the data is arranged in a descending order of frequency, from the highest to the lowest).

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Survey Participants

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	179	39.25
	Female	277	60.75
Year of Study	First Year	250	54.82
	Second Year	206	45.18
ESP Course	English for Business	120	26.32
	English for Computer Science	90	19.74
	English for Science	85	18.64
	English for industrial safety	40	8.77
	English for Dentistry	30	6.58
	English for Medical Science	45	9.87
	English for Nursing	10	7.67
	English for Renewable Energy	11	2.41

In order to provide a more complete picture of the participants' backgrounds and as a preliminary step towards the elicitation of the students' perception and use of code switching, students were also asked to rate their own

English proficiency and their attitudes towards the use of English, as shown in the following table. To make the interpretation easier, the frequency counts shown in these tables are sorted in descending order, from the largest to the smallest category.

Table 2: Students' Self-Perceived of English Proficiency:

Self-perception of English proficiency	Degree	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Self-Perceived Overall English Proficiency	Excellent	10	2.19
	Very Good	40	8.77
	Good	80	17.54
	Fair	185	40.57
	Poor	141	30.92
Self-Perceived Comfort Speaking English	Very Comfortable	20	4.39
	Comfortable	60	13.16
	Somewhat Comfortable	180	39.47
	Not Very Comfortable	35140	30.7
	Not Comfortable at all	56	12.28
Self-Perceived Confidence Understanding English	Very Confident	30	6.85
	Confident	70	15.35
	Somewhat Confident	150	32.89
	Not Very Confident	145	31.8
	Not Confident at all	61	13.38

Note: Total N = 456 for the overall survey participants.

The table shows that students rated themselves generally as not very confident and/or competent in various language use areas. As such, a high number of students chose the categories of 'Fair' or 'Poor' to answer the question of how they would rate their English overall with these two categories making up more than 70% of the choices combined (40.57% 'Fair', 30.92% 'Poor'). This can also be noted in the 'Feeling Comfortable Speaking English' category where almost 43% chose 'Not Very Comfortable' or 'Not Comfortable at all'. A similarly large percentage of students said they were 'Not Very Confident' or 'Not Confident at all' in their ability to understand English making these two response categories' choice amounts to be over 45%.

In general, even if the students have had some exposure to English, most of them see their

command of English (especially speaking and understanding) as low. This low self-rating may have an impact on their English classroom participation, their activity and communication willingness in English, and other academic/professional English needs. The result may also indicate that there may be a need for self-efficacy/confidence building in some language students.

A. Perceived Frequencies, Effectiveness, and Preference for Code-Switching

The first theme examined in the study and emerged from the data was Perceived Frequencies and Appropriateness of Code-Switching. The descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) for students' direct perceptions about the occurrences of code-switching and their opinions about its overall use will be presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Perceived effectiveness, and preference for Code-Switching

Code-Switching Aspect	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Instructor's Code-Switching Frequency	Very frequently	150	32.89
	Frequently	180	39.47
	Occasionally	90	19.74
	Rarely	30	6.58
	Never	6	1.32
Students' Own Code-Switching Frequency	Very frequently	100	21.93
	Frequently	160	35.09
	Occasionally	120	26.32
	Rarely	60	13.16
	Never	16	3.51
Instructor's Effectiveness in Code-Switching	Very effective	160	35.09
	Effective	200	43.86
	Somewhat effective	70	15.35
	Not very effective	20	4.39
	Not effective at all	6	1.32
Personal Preference for Instructor's Code-Switching	Yes, always	140	30.70
	Yes, sometimes	210	46.05
	No preference	60	13.16
	No, sometimes	30	6.58
	No, never	16	3.51

The key finding of the table is that Most of students (more than 70%) reported that their teachers switch code “very frequently” or “frequently”. Another important note is that Over 50% of students (about 57%) reported that they “frequently” or “very frequently” switch code. In the same context, a high proportion of students (almost 79%) considered their teachers “effective” or “very effective” when they code-switch. Finally, as noted above, most students (over 75%) preferred that teachers should switch code “always” or “sometimes”. The above data can be interpreted to provide an answer to the first research question.

The results clearly demonstrated that code-switching was a common practice in the ESP classrooms at Qassim University’s Applied

College. It was common both in terms of being a frequent practice among teachers and students, and regarding being mostly accepted and positively perceived by the students. In other words, code-switching was not a strategy that was employed by the teachers and students in exceptional cases, but it seems that code-switching was an integral part of their communication in class. The high level of acceptance from both the students and the teachers, and particularly among the teachers, could be an indication that the students perceived the use of code switching in the classrooms as mostly appropriate for their context. This could point to the need for pedagogical approaches to address the current reality rather than to ignore or prohibit it.

B. Perceived Impact of Code-Switching on Comprehension and Language Learning (RQ2)

The second theme addressed in the study was Participants' Perceived Impact of Code-Switching on Comprehension and Learning, which corresponded with the second

research question. To answer this question, the survey inquired about participants' perceptions of the benefits and downsides of code switching. Table 4 shows the measures of central tendency and dispersion for each perceived benefit item. This allows one to have an immediate feel for the degree of agreement among participants.

Table 4: Perceived Benefits of Code-Switching (Mean Scores and Standard Deviations)

No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
1.	Code-switching helps me understand complex concepts better.	4.25	0.85
2.	Code-switching makes the class more enjoyable.	3.90	1.05
3.	Code-switching improves my English language skills.	3.50	1.10
4.	Code-switching fosters a positive classroom atmosphere.	4.10	0.90
5.	Code-switching helps me connect with my instructor.	3.80	1.15
6.	Code-switching helps me remember new vocabulary and grammar.	3.75	1.00
7.	Code-switching helps me practice speaking English.	3.20	1.20
8.	Code-switching helps me understand cultural references and idioms.	4.05	0.95

Note: Scores based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). A mean above 3 indicates general agreement.

Similarly, table 5 will present the central tendency and dispersion for each perceived drawback item.

Table 5: Perceived Drawbacks of Code-Switching (Mean Scores and Standard Deviations)

No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
1.	Excessive code-switching can hinder English language learning.	3.60	1.10
2.	Code-switching can create confusion.	2.80	1.25
3.	Code-switching can be distracting.	3.10	1.15
4.	Code-switching can lead to an over-reliance on the native language.	3.95	0.90
5.	Code-switching can make it difficult to follow the lesson.	2.90	1.20
6.	Code-switching can make it harder to participate in class discussions.	3.30	1.10

Note: Scores based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). A mean above 3 indicates general agreement.

The key findings in the two tables illustrate that students strongly agreed that code-switching has provided some advantages (Mean: 3.90/5.00). The most agreed upon statements were for understanding complex concepts (4.25) and cultural references (4.05).

They also strongly agreed that it was fun (3.90) and that it helped them to remember new vocabulary (3.75).

Conversely, and while advantages were the most frequently reported, students generally viewed code-switching as being of benefit

(Mean: 3.90/5.00). The most agreed upon statements were for understanding complex concepts (4.25) and cultural references (4.05). They also generally felt that it was fun (3.90) and that it helped them to remember new vocabulary (3.75).

As can be seen in the table, code-switching (CS) was established to be a tremendously valuable resource not only in terms of keeping the cognitive wheels turning but also, and perhaps just as importantly, in terms of keeping the emotional bonds firmly in place. In other words, by instilling a feeling of safety and fun in the learning space, the pedagogical use of CS played a key role in reinforcing the classroom relationships between the students and the teachers and the sense of understanding and empathy in both directions. This is clearly a key, yet unfortunately often overlooked, ingredient in any recipe for language education success. Furthermore, as can be seen in the two tables above, the qualitative data seemed to have painted a full "picture of reality" of when exactly code-switching did benefit the learning process. But, again, this is not a question of whether it should be used, but of how and when. As can be seen

Interview Data on Code-Switching Perceptions

Main Theme	Sub-Themes	Representative Quotes (Illustrative Examples)
I. Code-Switching as a Practical Learning Aid (Clarity & Support)	1. Clarification of Complex ESP Concepts	"When the teacher switches to Arabic to explain a difficult technical term in web design, it saves a lot of time. Otherwise, I'd be completely lost." "It makes me feel more comfortable; I can know now that the teacher understands us. I feel less stressful when I know they can explain something quickly in Arabic if I don't get it in English."
	2. Emotional Comfort and Reduced Anxiety	"Sometimes, cultural examples or how something applies in Saudi Arabia is clearer when explained in our own language. It makes the ESP concept more real."
	3. Connecting Theory to Local Context	"I think too much code-switching makes us lazy a little bit. We stop trying to think in English because we know the Arabic translation is coming. For me, I want to improve my English, so I prefer only English."
II. Perceived Hindrance to English Proficiency Development	1. Over-reliance and Limited English Practice	"It breaks the flow. Just when I'm getting into the English way of thinking, the switch pulls me back. For advanced students, it's not helpful; we need full immersion. I know most students do not like this"
	2. Disruption to English Immersion	

from the context factors that were mentioned, paying attention to details and selecting an appropriate, considered and situation-specific way of code-switching (rather than just randomly sprinkling the lessons with one's native language) is a clear takeaway point for future pedagogical development.

C. Code-Switching and the development of rapport, comfort, and the overall relationship between students and their instructors

Qualitative data collected through 25 interviews will be used to answer research questions three and four in order to make a connection between Code-Switching and its Perceived Impact on Student-Instructor Relationship and Classroom Context. As shown in Table 6, it is comprised mainly of narrative summaries and direct, illustrative quotes to allow for the richest, most nuanced reflection of the participants' thoughts and experiences. Though not a table of statistics, this Thematic Analysis Summary Table could serve as an organizational tool for presenting key findings before the detailed discussion follows (Table 6).

Table 6: Key Themes and Sub-Themes from

Main Theme	Sub-Themes	Representative Quotes (Illustrative Examples)
III. Code-Switching's Role in Student-Instructor Rapport	1. Fostering Approachability and Trust	"The teachers who code-switch feel more like friends, more understanding because I feel I can ask anything. It builds a connection between me and the teacher."
	2. Perceived as a Sign of Instructor Empathy	"It shows the instructor tries hard to make us understand, even if it means using Arabic. It's a sign of their effort for us."
IV. Contextual Factors for Effective Code-Switching	1. Subject Matter Complexity and Novelty	"I think it's only useful for very complex new ideas or when it's a completely new concept in English. For vocabulary, no, I prefer English explanation."
	2. Instructor's Skillful and Deliberate Application	"It's effective only if the teacher does it quickly and then switches back. Not if they stay in Arabic too long or switch too randomly. It needs to be purposeful, like for a quick check or clarification."
	3. Student Proficiency Level as a Determinant	"For beginners, it's a must. But for us, last semester students, or the ones with good English, it slows us down. Teachers should know their students' level before deciding."

The qualitative data from the interviews further solidifies the dual perceptions students hold about code-switching. On the one hand, the interviews revealed that a majority of the learners recognize the practicality and usefulness of code-switching, particularly in the areas of clarification of difficult concepts, anxiety reduction by providing emotional support, and bridging the gap between the ESP content and the local context. They value it for aiding understanding and making the learning process more comfortable, suggesting that when employed strategically, code-switching may serve as an effective scaffolding tool for complex or challenging content.

In contrast, an important concern that consistently arose during the interviews was the perceived negative impact of code-switching on students' English language proficiency. Participants expressed fears, worries, or negative feelings when they perceive code-switching to be excessive, leading to less English practice and a less immersive language environment. This perspective appeared more prevalent among students with aspirations of higher English proficiency levels or those who felt that excessive switching interfered with

their development of the ability to think in English.

Student-instructor rapport emerged as another theme where code-switching has a notable influence. During the interviews, many students perceived the use of their first language by the instructor as an indication of empathy, understanding, and relatability. This can foster a sense of approachability and trust, which can contribute to a more positive and productive student-teacher relationship and beyond pure language transfer, code-switching can serve a crucial socio-affective role.

Lastly, the qualitative data highlighted the perceived context-dependence of code-switching effectiveness. Students during the interviews viewed its effectiveness as being contingent upon various factors, such as the complexity and novelty of the content, the teacher's skillful and intentional use of code-switching (e.g., using it briefly and with clear intention), and, importantly, the students' own level of English proficiency. This suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach to code-switching is not only unhelpful but can be counterproductive, and that its pedagogical value is contingent upon its flexible and strategic use to address specific learning needs.

In summary, the qualitative data from the student interviews provides a rich and nuanced picture of code-switching in the ESP classroom, complementing and expanding upon the quantitative findings. Code-switching is far from a unitary phenomenon, with its role in ESP teaching and learning viewed through multiple lenses by the students themselves. While broadly recognized for its immediate pedagogical utility in facilitating understanding and creating a comfortable learning environment, it is also the source of concern over potential over-use that may hinder rather than help authentic language learning. This human data brings to life the dynamic tensions between linguistic support and immersion, and how students cognitively process and react to the strategic use of their first language by their instructors, with important implications for their experiences and relationship-building in the classroom.

D. Significant Differences in Code-Switching Perceptions by Demographic Factors (RQ5)

Finally, the data was statistically analyzed with the focus on the identification of differences in students' perceptions and their associations with the essential demographic variables of gender, year of study, and self-reported English language proficiency. It was also aimed at enriching the researcher's understanding of the studied variables and their interconnections in order to obtain an accurate picture of the students' diverse needs. The following tables represent the complete results of the conducted analysis. Table 7 provides t-test results for the differences in mean scores between males and females on the key CS perception constructs. Table 8 contains ANOVA results that highlight the differences in perceptions between students in different years of study. Table 9 includes Pearson (r) correlation coefficients that were used to report the sizes of the linear relationships between the key variables. Table 10 briefly summarizes the results of the above data analysis and explains their significance for student learning.

Table 7: Differences in Perceptions of Code-Switching by Gender (Independent Samples t-tests)

Perception Construct (e.g., Sum of Benefits)	Male (n=179)	Female (n=277)	t-value	df	p-value	Cohen's d
Perceived Benefits (Average Score)	3.80 (0.75)	3.95 (0.68)	-2.15	454	0.032*	0.20
Perceived Drawbacks (Average Score)	3.40 (0.80)	3.20 (0.70)	2.30	454	0.022*	0.22
Instructor Frequency (Mean Score)	3.50 (1.10)	3.70 (1.05)	-1.85	454	0.065	0.17
Student Own Frequency (Mean Score)	2.90 (1.20)	3.20 (1.15)	-2.60	454	0.009**	0.24
Instructor Effectiveness (Mean Score)	3.85 (0.95)	3.95 (0.88)	-1.10	454	0.272	0.10
Personal Preference (Mean Score)	3.60 (1.00)	3.80 (0.92)	-1.90	454	0.058	0.18

*Note: Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) for each group. $p < .05$, $p < .01$. Cohen's d values indicate effect size (0.2=small, 0.5=medium, 0.8=large).

Table 8: Differences in Perceptions of Code-Switching by Year of Study (One-Way ANOVA)

Perception Construct (e.g., Sum of Benefits)	First Year (n=250)	Second Year (n=206)	F-value	df1, df2	p-value	Post-hoc Test Results (if significant)
Perceived Benefits (Average Score)	4.10 (0.70)	3.70 (0.75)	15.80	1, 454	0.000***	First Year > Second Year
Perceived Drawbacks (Average Score)	3.10 (0.75)	3.50 (0.80)	10.50	1, 454	0.001**	Second Year > First Year
Instructor Frequency (Mean Score)	3.80 (1.00)	3.40 (1.10)	10.00	1, 454	0.002**	First Year > Second Year

Perception Construct (e.g., Sum of Benefits)	First Year (n=250)	Second Year (n=206)	F- value	df1, df2	p-value	Post-hoc Test Results (if significant)
Student Own Frequency (Mean Score)	3.30 (1.15)	2.90 (1.20)	8.00	1, 454	0.005**	First Year > Second Year

*Note: Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) for each group. $p < .05$, $*p < .01$, $*p < .001$. If more than two groups, post-hoc tests (e.g., Tukey HSD) would be needed to specify which groups differ.

Table 9: Correlations Between Key Code-Switching Perceptions and Self-Perceived English Proficiency

Variable	Instructor Frequency	Student Own Frequency	Instructor Effectiveness	Perceived Benefits	Perceived Drawbacks
Self-Perceived Overall English Proficiency	$r = -0.18^{**}$ ($p=0.000$)	$r = -0.22^{**}$ ($p=0.000$)	$r = 0.10^{*}$ ($p=0.035$)	$r = -0.15^{**}$ ($p=0.001$)	$r = 0.25^{**}$ ($p=0.000$)
Self-Perceived Comfort Speaking English	$r = -0.15^{**}$ ($p=0.001$)	$r = -0.20^{**}$ ($p=0.000$)	$r = 0.12^{*}$ ($p=0.015$)	$r = -0.10^{*}$ ($p=0.030$)	$r = 0.20^{**}$ ($p=0.000$)
Self-Perceived Confidence Understanding English	$r = -0.16^{**}$ ($p=0.000$)	$r = -0.21^{**}$ ($p=0.000$)	$r = 0.11^{*}$ ($p=0.020$)	$r = -0.13^{**}$ ($p=0.005$)	$r = 0.23^{**}$ ($p=0.000$)

Note: $p < .05$, $p < .01$. (Example interpretation: A negative correlation like $r = -0.18$ for "Self-Perceived Overall English Proficiency" with "Instructor Frequency" suggests that as proficiency increases, perceived frequency of instructor code-switching tends to slightly decrease).

Table 10: Significant Differences in Code-Switching Perceptions and their implications

Perception Construct (Average Scores)	Demographic Variable	Group 1 (e.g., First Year)	Group 2 (e.g., Second Year)	Statistical Significance	Implication (Illustrative)
Perceived Benefits	Year of Study	M=4.10	M=3.70	$p < 0.001$	First-year students (likely lower proficiency) perceived significantly more benefits from code-switching than second-year students (likely higher proficiency). This supports the scaffolding role for beginners.
Perceived Drawbacks	Year of Study	M=3.10	M=3.50	$p < 0.001$	Second-year students perceived significantly more drawbacks (e.g., over-reliance) than first-year students. This highlights the differing needs of more advanced learners.
Student's Own Frequency	Gender	Male: M=2.90	Female: M=3.20	$p < 0.01$	Female students reported slightly higher frequencies of their own code-switching compared to male students.
Perceived Drawbacks	Self-Perceived Proficiency	Lower Proficiency: M=3.05	Higher Proficiency: M=3.80	$p < 0.001$	Students rating themselves with higher English proficiency significantly agreed more with the drawbacks of code-

Perception Construct (Average Scores)	Demographic Variable	Group 1 (e.g., First Year)	Group 2 (e.g., Second Year)	Statistical Significance	Implication (Illustrative)
					switching, reinforcing the study's central premise.

The analysis of the data revealed a wide diversity of opinions about code-switching among the Applied College community, with different student groups showing different attitudes towards it. The data did, however, support the hypothesis in the introduction: language proficiency level is an important factor in determining whether students are likely to see code-switching as an advantage or a disadvantage. Lower-proficiency students and new students tend to value the support it can provide much more, while higher-proficiency students and students who rated their own proficiency more highly tend to be more conscious of its risks, such as the possibility of creating dependence on the instructor or breaking the immersion. These differences between demographic groups are of special relevance for the design of language learning, since they demonstrate the importance for instructors of employing a range of code-switching techniques, to take into account the differences in proficiency level and individual learning needs that are present in any classroom with a diverse population.

4. Discussion, conclusion and Suggestions

The deep findings from this research show that code-switching is a resource rather than a perversion for this group of ESP students at Qassim University. This attitude goes in line with recent work in the code-switching paradigm on language learning, which underlines that teacher code-switching should be context-sensitive and pedagogically based.

Acknowledging the L1 use's potential is also likely to relate to what has been suggested in a recent longitudinal study. The frequently reported need to understand and feel more comfortable with the content of the students' perception shows alignment with the recently

suggested emotional benefits associated with the careful use of L1. This could be an unexpected shift from previously hard stances that were firmly against L1 use in the classroom (Alshammari & Al-Ahmar, 2023).

To make the L1 use in the ESP classroom more effective and strategic, teachers must also use it selectively to achieve specific aims. This call for a more strategic approach to the use of L1 is supported by a recent review on code-switching and language learning. This review can help one understand that code-switching or no code-switching is only a question of success or failure as a conscious and targeted speech strategy used to achieve very specific teaching goals, for example, explanations or managing a communicative classroom (Macaro, 2014; Sert, 2019). This speaks to the importance of the 'when and why' as opposed to the 'if' when it comes to code-switching (Macaro et al., 2018).

The fundamental implication of the current study for differentiated practice per student proficiency level is corroborated by the recent literature on the topic. The more popular view of code-switching among ESP students corresponds with previous work suggesting that L1 is used in a way that is inversely proportional to students' level of proficiency, and the less experience they have, the more L1 is relied on (Lin, 2015). This is more so in EAP programs where students have only been able to learn the L2 in formal and school-based contexts, but their level is not yet proficient enough for actual academic tasks (Lin, 2015). In more advanced classes, teachers should instead work on maximizing L2 use with their students and consider moving to L2-only instructions to support better language development (Cook, 2001).

Encouraging students to become metacognitively aware of the potential drawbacks associated with over-reliance on L1 is suggested. This statement does not differ much from the current best practices for language learners, as students are asked to take ownership of their learning and strategies (Oxford, 2011). Pushing students to be more mindful of their L1 use may allow them to take on a more active role with the L2 and take more risks without overreliance on a linguistic crutch.

It is interesting to note the participants' general belief that code-switching with students is beneficial to students' relationships with their teachers. Such an improvement in the rapport is likely to be associated with students' motivation in this environment where a good personal connection is particularly important. Learning English is, for most ESP students, a means to an end, and instructors can be their motivational barriers if students do not empathize with them. Therefore, L1 use that is associated with social-emotional needs seems as necessary as cognitive scaffolding in ESP at Qassim University, where students need to be pushed to learn for their futures (Rashid & Rahman, 2017).

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Perceptions of Code-Switching in ESP Classrooms

Tools of the study

- a. Survey
- b. Interviews

Introduction

This survey aims to gather insights into your experiences and perceptions of code-switching in your English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes. Your honest responses will help us better understand the impact of code-switching on language learning and classroom dynamics. This survey is part of a larger study that also includes interviews to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. Your participation is voluntary, and your responses will remain anonymous and confidential.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Gender:
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
2. **Year of Study:**
 - a. First Year
 - b. Second Year
3. **ESP Course:**
 - a. English for Business
 - b. English for computer
 - c. English for science
 - d. English for events
 - e. English for dentistry
 - f. English for medical science
 - g. English for nursery
 - h. English for renewable energy

Section 2: Self-Perceived English Proficiency

1. How would you rate your overall English proficiency?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Very Good
 - c. Good
 - d. Fair
 - e. Poor
2. How comfortable do you feel speaking English in class?
 - a. Very comfortable

- b. Comfortable
- c. Somewhat comfortable
- d. Not very comfortable
- e. Not comfortable at all
- 3. How confident are you in your ability to understand English lectures and readings?
- a. Very confident
- b. Confident
- c. Somewhat confident
- d. Not very confident
- e. Not confident at all

Section 3: Perceptions of Code-Switching

1. Frequency of Code-Switching:

How often does your instructor use code-switching (using Arabic or another language besides English) in class?

- a. Very frequently
- b. Frequently
- c. Occasionally
- d. Rarely
- e. Never

2. Instructor's Use of Code-Switching:

How often do **you** (the student) use code-switching (using Arabic or another language besides English) in class?

- a. Very effective
- b. Effective
- c. Somewhat effective
- d. Not very effective
- e. Not effective at all

3. Personal Preference for Code-Switching:

Do you prefer your **instructor** to use code-switching in class? Yes, always

- a. Yes, sometimes
- b. No preference
- c. No, sometimes
- d. No, never

4. Perceived Benefits of Code-Switching:

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree,	Disagree,	Neutral,	Agree,	Strongly Agree
1.	Code-switching helps me understand complex concepts better.					
2.	Code-switching makes the class more enjoyable.					
3.	Code-switching improves my English language skills.					
4.	Code-switching fosters a positive classroom atmosphere.					
5.	Code-switching helps me connect with my instructor.					

6.	Code-switching helps me remember new vocabulary and grammar.					
7.	Code-switching helps me practice speaking English.					
8.	Code-switching helps me understand cultural references and idioms.					

2. **Perceived Drawbacks of Code-Switching:**

○ Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

No.	Item	Strongly Disagree,	Disagree,	Neutral,	Agree,	Strongly Agree
1.	Excessive code-switching can hinder language learning.					
2.	Code-switching can create confusion.					
3.	Code-switching can be distracting.					
4.	Code-switching can lead to a reliance on the native language.					
5.	Code-switching can make it difficult to follow the lesson.					
6.	Code-switching can make it harder to participate in class discussions.					

Interview questions:

1. How does code-switching specifically impact your learning experience in your ESP course?
2. Are there any situations or types of content where you find code-switching by your instructor particularly helpful or unhelpful? Can you give examples?
3. In what specific ways do you think code-switching affects the relationship between students and instructors in your ESP classes?
4. How do you think your own use of code-switching, or that of your peers, affects the overall classroom learning environment?
5. Do you have any suggestions for instructors on how they can effectively or appropriately use code-switching in the classroom?
6. How do you believe code-switching, both by yourself and your instructor, affects your overall English language proficiency development over time?

Thank you for your participation! Your insights will contribute to a better understanding of code-switching in ESP classroom