

Chinese Teachers' Attitudes towards Code Switching as a Pedagogical Strategy in EFL Classrooms

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Abstract: This article conducts a case study investigating how two English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers viewed code switching as a pedagogical strategy adopted in the secondary level of EFL teaching at a complementary language school in Chinese Mainland. Specifically, it aims to reveal the perceptions of Chinese teachers in three attitudinal components (cognition, affection, behavior) towards the underlying reasons, functions, and possible factors of code switching in EFL classrooms. This qualitative research conducted a detailed inquiry analysis via data collected from three-phase in-depth interviews. The study illustrates that both participants share positive cognitive attitudes regarding pedagogical code-switching strategy in classes due to its functional effectiveness, convenience, and communication benefits. Though holding contradictory personal preferences on code switching, both participants firmly believe code switching would be served as a long-term teaching strategy in their classes. Additionally, students' English proficiency is discovered as a prominent factor resulting in teachers' code-switching performances in class, followed by factors such as national education mode, teachers' language ability, and curriculum settings. The findings reported in this paper will present the voice of EFL teachers at a complementary language school, and contribute to our further understanding of teachers' considerations behind attitudes towards pedagogical code switching, as well as raise the awareness of the influence of sociocultural dimensions on code switching in EFL teaching. Meanwhile, the study is expected to call on increasing the awareness of the diversity of teachers' stances on pedagogical code switching, and to deepen the understanding of the reasons behind their attitudes by providing plausible factors and elaborations.

1. Introduction

The issue of using code-switching as a pedagogical strategy in EFL teaching circumstances has received considerable critical attention in the recent decade.[11,27,43,48,56,59,59,70,71,72] it is referred to differently in a variety of linguistic fields: Through the lens of second language acquisition, code switching is a natural occurrence in bilinguals' language behaviors, and it is an important competence of speakers who master more than one language.[12,13,14] Studies of language learning and teaching commented code switching as a typical classroom practice performed in speaking turns between teacher and students,[33,36,38,66] and an alternation that a

speaker embeds the elements of first language (L1) into a second language (L2) utterance.[50] Since code switching nowadays has been generalized in various conversational contexts in and outside the classroom, Cenoz and Gorter distinguished teachers' intentional classroom code-switching performances from those unplanned language mixing out of personal habits as 'pedagogical translanguaging'. [14] It specifically refers that code switching is utilized purposefully from the teacher's side and serves as a pedagogical strategy for giving instructions in a language class. And the idea of code switching as a pedagogical strategy will be the main focus of the current study to discuss.

For pedagogical implications, code switching has been widely suggested to be adapted in practical teaching, and training programs should consider incorporating code switching as an effective teaching strategy.[14,37,60,67] One plausible explanation is due to its compelling functions approved to be capable of dealing with assorted situational problems in class, such as accessing vocabularies, scaffolding knowledge, comprehending grammar rules, disciplining students, etc., and its benefits on promoting student-teacher relationships and producing a harmonious and relatively natural learning atmosphere.[1,11,32,37,60,68,71] Besides, quite a few studies investigating attitudes/perceptions towards in-class code-switching performances present that students and teachers in secondary schools generally have positive attitudes towards pedagogical code switching in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, although they have different stances on varying functions of code switching.[27,30,48,60,71]

Despite that, some research found the ambivalence between teacher participants' beliefs and their actual behaviors on code switching: In Yao's study, many participant teachers have admitted their feelings of shame and reluctance of acknowledging code switching as a teaching strategy when being elicited on their language practices of teaching in interviews, however in actual practices, they still incorporate code switching into highly-engaged classroom teaching for exam-oriented objectives under the guidance of nationally or provincially published syllabuses.[66] A similar phenomenon has been found in a recent study by Richards and Wilson, where teachers believed in English-only norm and refused to accept code switching as a strategy in their language teaching.[52] As Tamene and Desalegn demonstrated in their study, some educators hold ambivalent personal beliefs about a specific language strategy regardless of its usefulness in EFL teaching practices.[60] The cause of resulting in inconsistent attitudes among educators towards code switching can be traced back to the past literature: Since the 1980s, there has been an increasing interest in the debate of attitudes towards language preference used as a pedagogical strategy in language teaching.[37,56,60] Ellis and Tana are the representatives of the scholars who agree on second language learning by speaking only in the target language. Scholars led by these attribute students' common errors in foreign language learning such as first-language (L1) interference to the negative transfer.[19,54] They believe that the essence of mastering the language is to use and practice it in class as a communicative tool. In contrast, more and more scholars realized the complexity of the linguistic landscape due to globalization in recent decades, which led to the awareness that language learning should be immersed in a multilingual world and code switching, as a natural multi-linguistic competence to acquire, should be further acknowledged and interpreted by stakeholders in the field of language teaching.[37]

In terms of the diversity of views on pedagogical code switching, Macaro in his study concluded three main standpoints shared by participant teachers towards the use of code-switching pedagogy in EFL classrooms: 1) Ideally, L1 should be banned from EFL classrooms and target language should be utilized as the only medium language of giving instructions. 2) L1 inevitably occurs in EFL classrooms but it has little pedagogical value and shall not be favored as a teaching strategy. 3) code switching between L1 and target language is favored and its pedagogical value is acknowledged in EFL classrooms.[39] However, the current study believes that people's

perceptions are complex and diverse in multi-dimensions, which can be probed deeper and further interpreted other than a generalized summary. Generally, attitude is a complex term comprising three distinguishable components (affection, cognition, and behavior), each of which reveals a facet of people's considerations towards the matter.[10] In psychology, the idea can be traced to a trichotomy method raised originally by Greek philosophers, who divided human experience into three parts: feeling, acting, and knowing.[42] Since the tripartite model arose, it has been adopted as an evaluating tool of emotions or to investigate conflicting emotions in in-depth discussions of attitude matters in various research fields, such as Psychology, Media, Sociology, and Linguistics.[41,45,59,20,66,2] By delving into these attitudinal components, attitude research can better demonstrate the validity of data, and the in-depth analysis can provide a precise basis for better-comprehending participants' attitudes and actual behaviors respectively. As Breckler suggested, since measuring attitude solely as an entity might cause a series of ambiguity problems, further scholars investigating attitude matters should be aware of the significance of measuring the three components or at least pointing out one component as the focal concern. [10]

From the perspective of sociolinguistics, code-switching practices could function differently and be attributed to various sociocultural factors.[9] Given the retrospective review on attitudes towards code switching in Chinese EFL contexts, universities have garnered the most attention to be investigated.[15,30,37,66,68] Specifically, students' views on teachers' code switching have become the main focus of research in recent years.[26,29,37,67] By contrast, teachers' attitudes towards their pedagogical code switching situated in EFL class at the secondary level of education in a complementary language school is potentially a new front to look at: Even under the same educational system, the teaching requirements in different levels and teaching considerations by individuals could bring about distinctive beliefs. Besides, although the perceptions among educators towards pedagogical code switching in English language teaching have been explored across various territorial sites, it has been argued that most findings were elicited from teachers' actual code-switching practices without an in-depth enquiry into their beliefs.[37] As previously discussed, teachers' beliefs on pedagogical code switching can sometimes be controversial to their actual behaviors. Additionally, previous research has rarely been found to systematically elaborate on the underlying factors that call forth teachers' views on pedagogical code switching, whereas, it is worth exploring: By identifying the underlying reasons, teachers' diverse beliefs can be further recognized, and the implying contradiction between their beliefs and actual practices can be plausibly comprehended. This can help better shape the existing theoretical framework of code switching and further reflect on its pedagogical usage in a more precise consideration by getting the potential factors involved.

Overall, a review of the existing research on code switching in EFL language teaching revealed four literature gaps. First, most of the existing research displays teachers' attitudes on their pedagogical code switching in a general sense and lacks further exploration of the reasons behind attitudes. Despite a similar research context having been investigated with a relatively larger sample size,[66] previous findings did not specify teachers' attitudes by eliciting the hidden factors in detailed inquiry, and the validity of data is worth re-examining after a decade. Secondly, research on Chinese EFL teachers' attitudes towards pedagogical code switching in secondary school settings has received little attention recently. Third, previous studies have massively addressed the functions and influential factors of code switching regarding its pedagogical effectiveness. In contrast, other factors, especially those in the sociocultural facet at the macro level, were rarely demonstrated and needed more research. Finally, there is a dearth of research that specifically analyzed the attitudinal components of Chinese EFL teacher participants. Hereby to fill the gaps, the present study seeks to address the following questions:

RQ1. What attitudes that Chinese EFL teachers hold regarding code switching as a

pedagogical strategy in their classes? And what are their underlying reasons?

RQ2. What are the factors influencing Chinese EFL teachers to adopt code-switching pedagogical strategy in their classes?

2. Methodology

2.1. Context and participants

This case study was undertaken at a Complementary secondary school in Nanchang city, Jiangxi province, Chinese Mainland. The tutorial language program at the complementary school aims to help target students consolidate the knowledge acquired from their mainstream schools. Its syllabuses of English teaching are consistently designed as exam-oriented, along with those required by the Ministry of Chinese Education, and serve for Gaokao, the college entrance exam in China. Of particular interest to the present study is that code switching commonly serves as a pedagogical strategy in the majority of secondary high schools in Chinese Mainland.[67] This school was selected because it gained fame and popularity among the locals due to its efficient style of English teaching, which greatly benefited the local students in the improvement of their English learning. Considering code switching can ensure teaching efficiency,[10,39,53,67] it is one of the empirical pedagogical strategies that the EFL teacher group at this school have commonly applied in their classes, thus guarantees a high probability that the selected teacher participants have a saying or certain degree of familiarity with pedagogical code switching.

The current study focused on two participants, Ethan and Eliza (here purposefully used pseudonyms for participants in this study to keep their real identity confidential). Both participants are local experienced EFL teachers in their thirties, who have gained master's degrees in TESOL (Teaching English to speakers of other languages) and have had more than a decade of teaching experience. Consistent with the body of target students, both participants share Chinese ethnic identity and speak Chinese as their L1. Before starting their teaching career, both of them received the teacher training program required by the school, where teacher candidates were assigned to discover the patterns and rules of key knowledge points invisibly hidden in the authentic English test papers of Gaokao over the past ten years, and later apply those in mock teaching. It is noteworthy that there is no specific requirement on the medium of classroom instruction at this school, which implies the autonomy of teachers adopting code switching as a pedagogical strategy in classes. As the project focuses on teachers' code switching, both participants were selected because they not only had considerable English teaching experiences at the level of secondary high school but also were representatives of Chinese EFL teachers who constantly applied pedagogical code switching in their classes.

2.2. Data collection and analysis

In the first phase of interviews, both participants took part in structured interviews, where they were required to answer nine questions specifically referring to their comprehension of the term 'code switching', their aspects of attitudes toward pedagogical code switching in EFL teaching, reasons behind their attitudes, and possible factors of influencing teachers' code-switching behaviors in class. For the second phase (i.e., after around one and a half months), both participants were engaged in semi-structured interviews and asked to recall and share their previous teaching experiences in detail, especially to describe the scenarios of code switching served as a pedagogical strategy in EFL classes as well as to exemplify a few cases of classroom interactions as warrants for their comments and arguments in the first phase interviews. The intention of the design here is to test the validity of previously collected data and to understand teacher participants' considerations

behind their general attitudes and behaviors. The third phase of the interviews was designed with some supplementary questions to specify obscure expressions of the participants in the first two phases. Therefore, both interviews in this phase were structured, and questions were prepared for the participants respectively. For instance, ‘Can you please elaborate on the part of saying students lack comprehensive English skills? What do comprehensive skills here specifically mean?’ and ‘When you mentioned that frequently code-switching in class would lead to your tiredness, is the code switching here referred to in a general sense or typical functions?’ In particular, questions like ‘Were you implying a generally negative attitude towards pedagogical code switching when you mentioned that code switching is nothing but an unavoidable pedagogical technique you feel reluctant to apply in class?’ were intended to elicit which attitudinal component outweighs the overall perception of participants.

Three phases of the interviews were conducted primarily in Chinese (with occasional code switching between Chinese and English). The author took the first phase of interviews by meeting both participants at their school offices and recording the whole conversations in audio, as face-to-face interviews could provide a flexible and communicative survey format to maximize the quality and reliability of data. The following interviews were conducted online due to the limitations (i.e., time clash). Interviews in the second phase were audio-recorded by smartphone, and the longest one lasted about thirty-four minutes. Considering that fewer data were to be collected, WeChat, a social media platform for instant messaging, was adopted as a means of interviewing participants in the third phase. Upon completion, key data from all interviews were selected, transcribed into texts, interpreted in English, and presented in Q&A format. The analysis of the collected data was conducted in line with Glaser’s constant comparative method, which allows the researcher to record the commonalities and differences of the categorized themes based on participants’ reports. [57] Regarding RQ1, I analyzed two participants’ attitudes by breaking them down into three components (cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects) and ranking them via the frequency or times of topic-referring in interviews. For the underlying reasons, I presented participants’ considerations on each attitudinal component in a detailed summary and annotated it beside the ranking for further elaboration. Regarding RQ2, I compared and contrasted categories of influential factors emerging between two participants’ statements in interviews to seek commonalities and differences. For example, under the exploration of ‘factors of pedagogical code-switching performances in EFL teaching’, I identified a perfect consistency between the statement from Ethan that students’ language ability matters the most in teachers’ choosing the medium of language in class and the one from Eliza that the English proficiency level of the target student group empirically decides whether teachers give them English-only or code-switching instructions in class.

To enhance the reliability of the current study limited by the sample size and simple qualitative method, all the interviews were reviewed through replaying the audio recordings multiple times to ensure that all essential information was captured and extracted for further analysis. Following the guidance of Sung’s thematic analysis, key findings were identified, categorized into themes, and properly refined by moving back and forth between the data and the literature review.[57] Additionally, it should be noted that the analysis was under the verification of participants by double-checking the possible misleading expressions and confirming the appropriateness of wording.

3. Discussion

The findings in this paper revealed some commonalities in how teacher participants viewed pedagogical code switching served in EFL teaching in different aspects of consideration and agreements on the influential factors leading to pedagogical code-switching performances in class.

Besides, inconsistent findings compared with previous studies will also be discussed as follows:

For the first research question exploring attitudinal components of code switching as a pedagogical strategy in EFL teaching, it was found that cognitive consideration outweighed the other two aspects for both participants and was placed vitally among the three for deciding participants' attitudes in a general sense. When eliciting the underlying reasons, one participant demonstrated the benefits of code switching in terms of its convenience and effectiveness in EFL pedagogy, here accordingly referring to its functions such as gap-filling on linguistic differences, smooth lesson-progressing, and elaboration of altruistic vocabulary terms and grammatical rules.[4,28,45,48,71] Consistent with the previous Chinese EFL studies,[30,67] most pedagogical code switching performances occurring in EFL classrooms were mainly for medium-oriented explanations of grammatical rules and lexical phrases. Additionally, one participant noted the effectiveness of code switching in clarifying classroom instructions and examining the grasp of key knowledge among students in EFL classes. This idea also accords with our earlier observations in literature that clarifying students' understanding and instructions is one of the potential reasons EFL teachers perform code switching in classes.[1,6,7,10,24,45,56,59,71]

In terms of affective attitudes, participants held ambivalent stances regarding code switching as a personal preference. As evident in the analysis, one participant claimed how easily she got tired from repeatedly switching back and forth between Mandarin and English for pedagogical purposes in her class, which consistently proves the idea that teachers' personal affective code-switching could be triggered by past experience and appears to be connected to speakers' subconscious and cognitive behaviour.[10] Her statement on negative feelings confirms the idea that frequent use of code switching for repetitive meaning might produce unpleasant emotions and cause a loss of interest in speaking.[20] Although Jingxia emphasized the significance of the repetitive function of code switching due to its effectiveness in Chinese EFL teaching, the current finding indicates that not all Chinese EFL teachers are emotionally fond of it.[30] Surprisingly, Sert's study found that repetitive code-switching instructions may not only lead to negative emotions in the speaker (teacher's side), but also lead to undesirable behavior in the listeners (students' side), such as loss of attention in class.[55] This enlightens future EFL educators to reflect on their previous repetitive code switching performances and re-consider the language strategies while giving demonstration or clarifying classroom instructions. In contrast, the other participant claimed that code switching brought him joyful teaching experiences. As a communicative tool, code switching facilitates student-teacher relationships to a great extent and ensured highly-engaged classroom interactions in EFL classes.[3,8,48,49] Despite different individual preferences, both parties acknowledged the relaxing and comfortable teaching and learning atmosphere that pedagogical code switching could bring in EFL classes.[7,28,31,48] In an affective aspect, teachers' code switching helps overcome learners' inner fears of speaking in the target language, which commonly manifests as a lack of confidence and a tendency to hold back to avoid speaking.[2,60] Meanwhile, adopting code switching as a pedagogical strategy for EFL teaching implies an encouragement for students to express their ideas actively in class.[8] In other words, code switching is a safe communicative mode that could remove language barriers and boost in-class communications between teacher and student sides.[32]

Furthermore, two participants were found to share their behavioral attitudes in agreement, firmly believing that code switching would be the pedagogical strategy that they stick to implementing in EFL teaching in a long-term career pathway. More specifically, both participants explained their reason that code switching is best suited for efficient Chinese EFL teaching so long as the status quo of English language learning in China remains unchanged (i.e. teaching objectives at the secondary high school level required by the Ministry of Education; target students' demands of English learning). Aligned with the findings in literature,[30,49,60] code switching is generally

recognized as an efficient teaching strategy and bringing benefits to Chinese EFL classrooms. However, the finding is contrary to the previous study suggesting that Chinese EFL lessons should be better delivered in English except for necessary elaborations on abstruse subject matters.[15] Plus, one Chinese EFL teacher participant claimed the opposite willingness to stick to English all the time in future classroom teaching in Cheng's study, though the corresponding reasons remain unclear due to it being the only exceptional case of the consensus data.[15] This inconsistency may be explained by the fact that the educational levels investigated by both studies were different, resulting in the distinctive language learning requirements for different groups of target students. Additionally, participants' statements imply that their behavioral attitudes are largely determined by their cognitive congruence that code switching serves an effective pedagogical strategy in EFL teaching, which was not revealed on the surface by the studies in history.[30,34] Instead, these previous studies listed a series of cognitive justifications (i.e. the benefits of code-switching in knowledge transmission and construction, classroom management, and interpersonal relationships) to prove the potential prosperity of further implementation of code switching in English education. It is also worth noting that two participants seemed to ignore discussion of their affective considerations while being elicited about the reasons behind their behavioral attitudes. Therefore, it is possible to conclude from the current study that regarding the attitudinal issue of code switching, cognitive benefits or inspiration dominate participants' behavioral preferences, regardless of participants' disagreement in the emotional sense. The finding differs from a previous study by Ajzen who claimed that there is a relatively low correlation between participants' narrated attitudes and their behaviors. The concern here is that the previous study did not specify the aspects of participants' narrative attitudes, which made results in both studies hard to compare.[9] However, the current finding is congruent with Yao's study that participants who dislike the idea of code switching would still adopt it in their EFL classes out of concern of its effectiveness.[66]

Regarding the second research question, students' English proficiency has been discovered in line with the existing research as the predominant factor influencing teachers' code switching performances in EFL classroom.[15,27,30,39,42,59] Specifically, it has been observed that the implementation of code switching commonly occurs in EFL classrooms where target learners involved are generally at lower or intermediate proficiency levels in English.[2] The present study supports this perspective with its finding on participants' common agreement that a majority of Chinese secondary high school students have been considered not acquiring sufficient English ability for comprehending English as the medium of instruction (EMI) lessons, and code switching is a necessary language strategy to address their problem by ensuring students to follow the teaching pace and understand knowledge delivered in class.

Consistent with the literature, this study found the national educational policy as another influential factor affecting language teaching mode.[35,49,61] In mainstream schooling, English is a compulsory subject for secondary high school students to learn with an exam-oriented purpose, in other words, to pass the college entrance exam.[52,69] The pursuit of teaching efficiency and the requirement for instant learning outcomes under the call by Chinese educational policy both limit EFL teachers' alternation of language use in classes and students' demands for accessing to English-only language environment.[67] Subsequently, most Chinese secondary high school students have underdeveloped English abilities to fit in immersive English circumstances. The finding confirms the association between social circumstance and classroom context, which proves that the EFL classroom as a special context is influenced by the social setting where target students grow up and socialize.[49,53] In accordance with the current finding, Kim and Lee indicated the importance of considering environmental factors to create a well-constructed learning environment for English learners.[34,35] To quote Wang's words, "language choice is in fact under the influence of many sociocultural factors such as the predominant education philosophy and popular language

learning beliefs, as well as a wider socio-political status quo”.[61] Therefore, it is reasonable to anticipate that national educational policy on EFL teaching might be the tip of the iceberg regarding the category of sociocultural and political factors of code-switching performances in Chinese EFL classrooms.

Moreover, the current study illustrates that teachers’ English proficiency is relevant to their code-switching performances in class, however, its impact was argued with contradictory statements by two participants. As mentioned earlier in literature, scholars in history consistently upheld different thoughts regarding the impact of teachers’ foreign language proficiency on code switching: On the one hand, switching back to L1 in EFL teaching is a reflection of educators’ insufficient language abilities, which was generally believed among a group of scholars and practitioners who assumed English should only be effectively taught in English itself.[15,18,53] Additionally, Zhunussova alluded to a trend that well-educated EFL teachers would be more inclined to switch from L1 to English while teaching to show their high social prestige.[73] On the other hand, the current study and a recent study by Zainil displayed alternative perspectives that teachers’ frequent code switching in class is a strategy to help weak students accommodate and relax in the language environment and gain enough confidence to overcome the difficulty resulting from language barriers.[71] Like participant Ethan commented in this study, a good presentation of teachers’ bilingual competence is to perform code switching flexibly and spontaneously to address instant issues in any classroom situation. The current study suggests that both arguments above are valid and not mutually exclusive, hereby teachers’ English proficiency requires a case-by-case analysis to decide whether it serves as a crucial factor. Notwithstanding compared with students’ English proficiency, it is a relatively weaker factor for reference when considering a pedagogical strategy in EFL teaching.

Finally, what is notable in the analysis is that the time limit of lessons set under the language curriculum program suppresses teachers’ creativity in producing highly efficient immersive English lessons for target students. In other words, curriculum setting will limit EFL teachers from exerting their language abilities to a great extent and forbid them from putting innovative teaching methods into practice. And code switching is an optimized choice of language strategy after the consideration of the course setting in this specific tutorial language program at the investigated complementary language school. In literature, recent studies have barely highlighted that code switching could be a result of critical considerations on the limitations of the course setting. A plausible explanation for this phenomenon is that most of the existing studies regarding code switching in EFL teaching are based on local mainstream schools or tertiary-level education in Chinese Mainland. Despite the fact that the school investigated in the current study share the same teaching objectives required by the Ministry of Education as mainstream schools, it is only available for the target student group to receive supplementary English education on weekends, which made local tutorial language programs impossible to set the same amount of time of teaching lesson as mainstream schooling could offer. Regardless, the finding still has further implications for other language programs to think about the time limit of lessons as a possible restraint of EFL classroom teaching.[72] Additionally, complementary language school (or weekend language school), where its tutorial language program as a rising trend of EFL education in Chinese Mainland in recent decades, is a potential research site that is worth being explored more in further studies in terms of its impact on Chinese EFL teachers’ code switching in class.[63]

4. Conclusions

This study is meant to present individual cases of Chinese EFL teachers’ code switching in their classrooms and alternative perspectives of their attitudes on code switching for EFL teaching with a

detailed description and analysis. The findings display that code switching is consistently agreed to be an efficient and beneficial pedagogical strategy in a cognitive attitudinal aspect towards English language teaching. Two participants presented different affective preferences on it, whilst they both shared a firm belief of continuing to adopt it in a long-term EFL teaching pathway as a reflection of their behavioral attitude. In line with the literature studies, students' English proficiency is discovered as the prominent factor influencing teachers' code-switching performances in Chinese EFL classes. Except for the observed commonality, the current study has further pedagogical values on the education field and implications on academic research field concluded as follows: (1) To avoid tiredness on both teacher and student sides, future educators should re-evaluate the frequency and amount of use of repetitive code-switching by condensing the unnecessary parts or replacing those with more succinct ways of delivering instruction clarification and demonstration on knowledge in EFL classes.[20,55] (2) While educators are thinking about how to deliver a complex knowledge point during lesson preparation, it is recommended to take their own English proficiency into consideration, specifically to be aware of the pedagogical purposes of a selected code-switching pattern and how to work out an ideal code-switching instruction via maximizing their existing bilingual competence to present the idea flawlessly.[15,71] (3) Further research is expected to enrich the diversity of research sites and explore how different sociopolitical-cultural factors and curriculum settings in language programs would affect teachers' behaviors and attitudes toward code switching.[35,49,61]

As with all studies, the authors are aware of the limitations in the current study: Due to limited sample sizes and restraints of data collection and analysis, the study represents the tip of an iceberg and findings in the current study should not be presented and interpreted as a generalized view of overall Chinese EFL teachers. Despite specific analysis covering nearly all key information from three-phased interviews, the total amount of time of interviews might be limited, and participants' mindsets could be subjectively restrained, which implies the fact that there are other undetected reasons behind their attitudes and categories of factors that require further investigations.[30] Furthermore, cases of spontaneous code-switching performances, not the focus of this current study, might be subconsciously taken into account when participants were asked to elicit responses by recalling their previous experiences. As such, future studies could incorporate more qualitative approaches, such as classroom observations and journals, to examine the validity of data. And hopefully, more diversity of findings towards attitudinal matter on code switching served in Chinese EFL teaching would be found to enrich the existing research database.

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