



International Journal of Education and Teaching

Publisher's Home Page: <https://www.svedbergopen.com/>



Research Paper

Open Access

Exploring the Perceptions of Tshivenda-Speaking Foundation Phase Teachers on the Effectiveness of Code-Switching in Second Additional Language Instruction

Matodzi G. Sikhwari¹ 

¹Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Venda, Private Bag X5050, Thohoyandou 0950, South Africa. E-mail: matodzi.sikhwari@univen.ac.za

Article Info

Volume 4, Issue 2, December 2023

Received : 23 August 2024

Accepted : 30 November 2024

Published : 31 December 2024

doi: [10.51483/IJEDT.4.2.2024.16-24](https://doi.org/10.51483/IJEDT.4.2.2024.16-24)

Abstract

Teaching Second Additional Languages (SAL) in multilingual classrooms, especially in the Foundation Phase, presents challenges for both learners and teachers. In Tshivenda-speaking classrooms, learners often struggle to learn a second language, and many teachers use code-switching to help bridge these language gaps. The gap in knowledge limits a full understanding of how code-switching affects language acquisition, teaching practices, and learner outcomes in multilingual classrooms. This article explores the perceptions of Tshivenda-speaking Foundation Phase teachers on using code-switching in SAL instruction. The article is based on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning, which emphasizes social interaction and language in cognitive development. In this framework, code-switching is seen as a useful tool to help learners connect new language concepts with their existing knowledge of Tshivenda. A qualitative research approach using a phenomenological design was adopted to understand teachers' experiences. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 Tshivenda-speaking Foundation Phase teachers from public primary schools in Limpopo Province. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed two main findings: first, teachers see code-switching as an effective way to explain complex language concepts and improve learner understanding, especially in early language learning. Second, teachers believe that code-switching helps create a more inclusive classroom environment where learners feel more confident and less intimidated by the second language. The study's findings underline the value of using code-switching in teaching and suggest the need for more research into its long-term effects on language skills and academic performance. The article recommends that teacher training programs focus on strategies for using code-switching to support multilingual learners, particularly in the Foundation Phase. It also suggests further research to explore how code-switching affects learners' academic outcomes. This research offers important insights into using code-switching in multilingual classrooms and provides recommendations for improving SAL instruction.

Keywords: Code-switching, Tshivenda, Second Additional Language, Foundation Phase, Teacher perceptions

© 2024 Matodzi G. Sikhwari. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.

1. Introduction

Teaching Second Additional Languages (SAL) in multilingual classrooms, particularly in the Foundation Phase, presents unique challenges for both educators and learners. In South Africa, where multiple languages are spoken, these challenges are especially evident in Tshivenda-speaking classrooms. Foundation Phase learners often find it difficult to learn a

* Corresponding author: Matodzi G. Sikhwari, Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, Department of Early Childhood Education; University of Venda, Private Bag X5050, Thohoyandou, 0950, South Africa. E-mail: matodzi.sikhwari@univen.ac.za

second language due to limited exposure and the linguistic distance between their home language, Tshivenda, and the second language, typically English (Meyers, 2021). Consequently, teachers in these classrooms face the complex task of facilitating language learning while creating an inclusive and supportive environment for young learners (Pillay and Govender, 2023).

One common strategy used by teachers in multilingual classrooms is code-switching. Code-switching refers to the practice of alternating between two or more languages within a single conversation or interaction. This strategy is often employed to help clarify difficult concepts, make learning more accessible, and enable learners to connect new information to their existing knowledge in their home language (Akinwumi, 2022). In the context of SAL instruction, code-switching is seen as a tool to bridge the gap between learners' first language (L1) and the second additional language (L2), making the learning process less intimidating and easier to understand (De Klerk, 2020).

Although code-switching is widely used in multilingual classrooms, particularly in South Africa, there is limited research on how Tshivenda-speaking teachers perceive its effectiveness in promoting language acquisition. Most existing studies focus on the general use of code-switching in language learning but do not examine the perspectives of teachers from specific language backgrounds, such as Tshivenda (Mkhize, 2021). As a result, a gap exists in the literature, preventing a deeper understanding of how code-switching influences teaching practices, language acquisition, and learner outcomes in Tshivenda-speaking classrooms.

This article aims to explore the perceptions of Tshivenda-speaking Foundation Phase teachers on the use of code-switching in SAL instruction. By investigating teachers' experiences, this study seeks to enhance our understanding of how code-switching can support language acquisition, improve teaching practices, and improve learner outcomes. The findings will also provide valuable insights into how code-switching can contribute to creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment in multilingual classrooms.

2. Background

Teaching a Second Additional Language (SAL) in multilingual classrooms is challenging, especially when learners have varying levels of proficiency in the target language. In South Africa, where multiple languages are spoken, Tshivenda-speaking learners face particular difficulties in learning a second language, often English. These challenges stem from limited exposure to English outside the classroom and significant linguistic differences between Tshivenda and English, which make it harder for learners to understand new language concepts (Meyers, 2021). As a result, teachers in Tshivenda-speaking Foundation Phase classrooms must overcome these obstacles while providing an inclusive and supportive learning environment (Pillay and Govender, 2023).

Code-switching, or alternating between two languages during a conversation or lesson, is a strategy widely used by teachers to address these challenges. Research shows that code-switching helps bridge the gap between a learner's home language (L1) and the second additional language (L2). It makes lessons more understandable by connecting new knowledge to what learners already know linguistically (Akinwumi, 2022). Additionally, this method encourages a sense of belonging and confidence among learners, as their home language is recognized and valued in the classroom (De Klerk, 2020).

However, the use of code-switching in SAL instruction is not without controversy. Some argue that relying too heavily on code-switching can reduce learners' exposure to the target language, limiting their ability to develop full proficiency (Mkhize, 2021). On the other hand, others believe that when used effectively, code-switching enhances teaching by reducing cognitive overload and helping learners gradually acquire the new language (Pillay and Govender, 2023).

While studies have explored code-switching in multilingual classrooms, there is little research focused on the views of Tshivenda-speaking Foundation Phase teachers regarding its effectiveness in SAL instruction. Understanding their perspectives is essential for developing strategies that improve language teaching and support better learning outcomes in these unique settings.

3. Problem Statement

There is a limited exploration of Tshivenda-speaking teachers' perceptions of code-switching in Second Additional Language (SAL) instruction, particularly in Foundation Phase settings. Teachers' perspectives are essential for understanding how code-switching affects language acquisition, teaching methods, and learner outcomes. For Tshivenda-speaking learners, code-switching is often used to bridge the gap between their first language (L1) and English, the

Second Additional Language (SAL). However, the extent to which this strategy helps or hinders language development is not well understood.

Most studies on code-switching focus on its theoretical foundations or its role in enhancing comprehension and inclusion in multilingual classrooms. While these studies provide useful insights, they often neglect the practical challenges teachers face when using code-switching in classrooms. Teachers must balance exposing learners to the target language with addressing their linguistic needs. This challenge is particularly critical in Foundation Phase classrooms, where learners are in a key stage of developing language skills.

Understanding Tshivenda-speaking teachers' perceptions of code-switching is crucial for addressing this gap. Exploring their views will contribute to evidence-based strategies that support SAL instruction and improve learner outcomes in multilingual educational contexts.

4. Conceptualizing Code-Switching

Code-switching is the practice of alternating between two or more languages during a single interaction, conversation, or teaching session. In Second Additional Language (SAL) instruction, it is viewed as a purposeful teaching strategy to help learners bridge the gap between their first language (L1) and the additional language (L2). For Tshivenda-speaking learners, code-switching typically involves moving between Tshivenda and English to make new language concepts clearer and more understandable (Akinwumi, 2022).

The concept of code-switching builds on the principle that learners' first language serves as a foundation for learning new languages. When teachers use Tshivenda to explain unfamiliar ideas, it connects learners' prior knowledge with new information. This reduces mental strain and enhances understanding (De Klerk, 2020). In the Foundation Phase, this approach is particularly important because it supports the early development of language and literacy skills, which are essential for future academic success (Pillay and Govender, 2023).

Code-switching is more than just a linguistic technique; it is also a teaching method that can support learning in several ways. For example, it helps clarify instructions, aligns lessons with learners' cultural backgrounds, and creates a welcoming classroom environment. Additionally, it boosts learners' confidence by recognizing and valuing their home language, making them feel included and supported (Meyers, 2021). However, code-switching must be used thoughtfully, as overreliance on it might limit learners' exposure to and practice in the target language, which can slow down their language development (Mkhize, 2021).

This study focuses on code-switching from the perspective of Foundation Phase teachers. Their experiences and insights are vital to understanding how code-switching influences both teaching methods and learner outcomes. By examining this practice in Tshivenda-speaking classrooms, the research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how code-switching can be effectively used to support SAL learning in diverse multilingual contexts.

5. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning, which highlights the importance of social interaction and language in cognitive development. Vygotsky explains that learning happens in a social context and that language is both a communication tool and a way to help people understand new ideas (Vygotsky, 1978). In classrooms where learners speak multiple languages, code-switching fits into Vygotsky's idea of scaffolding. Scaffolding is when a teacher or a knowledgeable person provides support to help learners achieve goals they cannot reach on their own (Lantolf and Thorne, 2021).

For Tshivenda-speaking learners, using both Tshivenda and English in code-switching acts as scaffolding. Teachers use Tshivenda to explain difficult English concepts, helping learners connect these new ideas with what they already know (Akinwumi, 2022). This process reduces the mental effort required for understanding and helps learners grasp the target language more effectively. Code-switching thus serves as a bridge that makes learning easier and more meaningful.

Another key part of Vygotsky's theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the space between what a learner can do alone and what they can achieve with guidance. In Second Additional Language (SAL) teaching, code-switching helps teachers work within this zone by providing explanations and tools that guide learners toward better understanding and fluency in the second language (De Klerk, 2020). As learners gain confidence and understanding, the teacher gradually reduces this support, allowing learners to apply language skills independently.

Furthermore, code-switching acknowledges the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of learners, which Vygotsky views as essential for effective learning. By using Tshivenda in the classroom, teachers validate the learners' home

language and cultural identity, creating a positive and inclusive environment. This approach supports not just academic growth but also emotional and social development (Meyers, 2021).

Through this theoretical lens, the study explores how Tshivenda-speaking teachers perceive the effectiveness of code-switching as a teaching strategy for improving SAL instruction.

6. Literature Review

Code-switching, the practice of alternating between two or more languages or dialects, has been a prominent feature of multilingual classrooms, particularly in contexts where learners speak multiple languages. Research suggests that code-switching offers various benefits, including enhancing comprehension, promoting learner engagement, and creating a supportive learning environment. However, some challenges related to over-reliance on this practice have also been highlighted, especially when it comes to second language acquisition. This literature review explores five key aspects of code-switching: (1) Code-switching and Comprehension, (2) Code-switching and Learner Engagement, (3) Challenges of Code-switching in Second Language Instruction, (4) Teacher Perspectives on Code-switching, and (5) Code-switching in the South African Foundation Phase Context.

6.1. Code-switching and Comprehension

One of the primary benefits of code-switching is its potential to enhance comprehension. The ability to use the learner's first language (L1) alongside the second additional language (L2) allows teachers to build on the learner's existing linguistic knowledge and connect new concepts with familiar ideas. Akinwumi (2022) notes that code-switching functions as a scaffold, providing learners with a bridge between the language they already know and the new language they are learning. This is particularly beneficial in classrooms where learners have limited proficiency in the target language. Using code-switching ensures that learners are not left behind and can better understand the lesson content. De Klerk (2020) further supports this, noting that code-switching enables educators to explain difficult or abstract concepts in a way that is more relatable to learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. By incorporating learners' L1, teachers can facilitate a deeper understanding of complex material and reduce the cognitive load of learning through a second language.

For example, when explaining scientific or mathematical concepts, educators often face challenges in conveying abstract ideas using a second language. In such cases, code-switching allows teachers to provide explanations in the learners' home language, ensuring that these difficult concepts are more accessible. This approach not only makes learning more understandable but also fosters a sense of security, as learners are more likely to feel supported in their learning environment. Therefore, code-switching in multilingual classrooms serves as a vital tool for facilitating comprehension, particularly when learners are still developing their proficiency in the target language.

6.2. Code-switching and Learner Engagement

Code-switching also plays a key role in promoting learner engagement. Learners are more likely to participate actively when they feel their first language is acknowledged in the learning process. This recognition fosters a sense of inclusion, which can significantly reduce language anxiety and promote confidence in classroom interactions. Meyers (2021) argues that when learners see that their home language is valued, they are more likely to engage in discussions, ask questions, and offer contributions. This increase in participation can lead to a more interactive classroom environment, where students feel comfortable expressing themselves and engaging with the content more deeply.

Githiora (2023) highlights that code-switching can transform a traditional classroom into a dynamic learning space. The ability to switch between languages creates an atmosphere of interaction and collaboration, encouraging learners to take an active role in their education. In this environment, students are not merely passive recipients of information but are instead encouraged to engage meaningfully with both their peers and the teacher. Moreover, this engagement extends beyond just linguistic development. Active participation in class discussions has been shown to enhance overall academic performance, as learners who are more engaged are better able to grasp and retain academic content.

By promoting learner engagement through code-switching, teachers can create an environment where learners are more motivated to participate, ask questions, and share ideas. This active involvement contributes not only to language development but also to the learners' overall academic success. Therefore, code-switching is an essential strategy for creating a supportive and interactive classroom environment that fosters both linguistic and academic growth.

6.3. Challenges of Code-switching in Second Language Instruction

Despite its many benefits, code-switching also presents several challenges, especially in the context of second language instruction. One of the main concerns is the potential over-reliance on the first language, which can hinder the development of fluency in the second language. Akinwumi (2022) warns that excessive use of code-switching may lead to learners becoming dependent on translation, rather than developing proficiency in the vocabulary, grammar, and structure of the second language. This dependency can slow down the acquisition of the second language and impede learners' ability to internalize new linguistic forms. As a result, while code-switching may provide immediate understanding, it may ultimately limit exposure to the second language, which is crucial for language development.

Meyers (2021) further points out that teachers often struggle to find the right balance between using code-switching to aid comprehension and ensuring that students receive enough exposure to the target language. For example, while code-switching may help clarify difficult concepts, it may also limit the amount of time learners are exposed to English or other target languages. Teachers must be mindful of how often they switch between languages and ensure that the use of L1 does not overshadow the opportunity for learners to engage with the L2. Overusing code-switching can thus become a hindrance to language acquisition, especially in contexts where immersion in the second language is a primary goal.

The challenge, therefore, is for teachers to strike a delicate balance. Code-switching should be used as a strategic tool to support understanding without hindering the goal of immersion and fluency in the second language. Teachers must be cautious of relying too heavily on the first language and ensure that they provide ample opportunities for learners to practice and use the second language in meaningful contexts. By doing so, they can prevent the negative impact of over-reliance on the home language and promote the development of second language proficiency.

6.4. Teacher Perspectives on Code-switching

Teachers' perceptions of code-switching are essential in understanding its effectiveness and role in multilingual classrooms. Research has shown that many teachers view code-switching as a valuable tool for addressing linguistic diversity and supporting learners who are still developing proficiency in the second language. De Klerk (2020) notes that teachers often use code-switching as a practical strategy to help students understand content more easily. For example, teachers may use L1 to explain complex or unfamiliar terms in a way that ensures learners grasp the material. This approach helps bridge the gap between students' linguistic abilities and the language of instruction, making learning more accessible.

However, some teachers express concerns about the potential drawbacks of code-switching, particularly its impact on the development of second language proficiency. Githiora (2023) emphasizes the importance of professional development to help teachers manage code-switching effectively. Teachers must be equipped with strategies that allow them to use code-switching strategically, ensuring that it supports language learning while also providing enough exposure to the target language. This professional training is essential for helping educators understand the nuances of code-switching and how to use it in ways that enhance, rather than hinder, language acquisition.

Research indicates that teachers need guidance and training to use code-switching appropriately in the classroom. Providing educators with tools to manage their use of L1 and L2 ensures that code-switching remains a helpful and effective pedagogical strategy. Teachers can benefit from learning how to use code-switching in a balanced way that promotes engagement and comprehension without negatively affecting the overall goal of language development. This highlights the need for targeted professional development that focuses on code-switching as an instructional strategy.

6.5. Code-switching in the South African Foundation Phase Context

In South Africa, multilingualism is common in classrooms, and code-switching is often used as a strategy to bridge the gap between learners' home languages and the language of instruction, which is typically English. However, there is limited research on how code-switching is used in the Foundation Phase, a critical stage for early language development. According to Meyers (2021), Foundation Phase teachers face the unique challenge of ensuring that young learners develop a solid foundation in the target language while still supporting their home languages. Akinwumi (2022) emphasizes that understanding the perspectives of teachers in this phase is vital, as their instructional practices can significantly affect how learners transition from their home language to English as a second additional language.

Foundation Phase teachers often navigate a delicate balance between promoting proficiency in English and valuing learners' home languages. The use of code-switching can support this transition by providing learners with linguistic support in their L1, ensuring that they are not left behind as they build their proficiency in the target language. However,

there is a lack of research exploring how teachers in this context perceive and implement code-switching. This gap in the literature underscores the need for further investigation into how code-switching can be strategically employed in the South African Foundation Phase to support early language development.

By examining the views of Foundation Phase teachers on code-switching, we can gain valuable insights into how this strategy can be used to support learners as they navigate the complexities of multilingual education. Understanding how teachers in South Africa use code-switching to support second language acquisition, while maintaining a focus on linguistic development in the target language, is essential for improving language teaching practices in this context.

The literature on code-switching highlights its importance as a pedagogical tool in multilingual classrooms. Code-switching enhances comprehension, promotes learner engagement, and provides a supportive learning environment for students. However, it also presents challenges, particularly in the context of second language acquisition. Over-reliance on the first language can limit exposure to the second language and slow down language acquisition. Therefore, teachers must use code-switching strategically to support comprehension without undermining immersion in the second language.

In the South African context, particularly in the Foundation Phase, there is a significant gap in understanding how teachers perceive and implement code-switching. Further research is needed to explore how this strategy can be used effectively to support early language development while ensuring that learners develop proficiency in the target language. By examining teacher perspectives, we can gain valuable insights into how code-switching can be employed as a tool to enhance multilingual education in South Africa.

7. Methodology

The research follows a qualitative approach, which is ideal for understanding the personal experiences and viewpoints of Tshivenda-speaking teachers regarding code-switching in Second Additional Language (SAL) instruction. This approach focuses on capturing the teachers' perspectives as they navigate the challenges of teaching in multilingual classrooms. The goal of the study is to explore how teachers perceive the role of code-switching in helping Foundation Phase learners understand and learn better.

A phenomenological design was used to explore the lived experiences of the teachers. This design is well-suited to the research because it aims to understand how individuals experience a specific phenomenon—in this case, code-switching in SAL instruction. Phenomenology helps to examine how teachers view their own teaching practices and how they think code-switching affects their learners' language development. By focusing on these teachers' experiences, the study seeks to uncover the essence of their teaching methods and the role that code-switching plays in their approach to education.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for a flexible and detailed exploration of teachers' perceptions and experiences. The semi-structured format gave the researcher room to ask specific questions while also allowing participants to share their thoughts and experiences in their own words. This approach was chosen because it fosters open discussion and provides a deeper understanding of each teacher's views on code-switching in SAL teaching.

The article targeted Tshivenda-speaking Foundation Phase teachers working in public primary schools in Limpopo Province, South Africa. The province has a large population of Tshivenda speakers, making it an ideal location for the study. The teachers were selected through purposive sampling, a method used to choose participants who are directly involved in code-switching in their teaching. This selection ensured that the teachers had relevant experiences to share, which was important for answering the research questions.

The sample consisted of 10 Tshivenda-speaking Foundation Phase teachers from different public primary schools in Limpopo. These teachers were chosen because they actively use code-switching in their SAL instruction, ensuring that the study focused on those with direct experience of the research topic. By selecting a small, specific sample, the study aimed to gain deeper insights into the teachers' experiences, which would not be possible with a larger, less focused sample.

The data was analysed using thematic analysis, a common method in qualitative research for identifying and interpreting patterns within the data. This method allowed the researcher to carefully examine the interview transcripts and identify recurring themes related to the teachers' views on code-switching. Thematic analysis helped the researcher understand both the positive and negative aspects of code-switching as seen by the teachers, providing a well-rounded picture of their experiences.

To ensure the reliability of the study's findings, several strategies were used. Member checking, where participants reviewed the interview transcripts for accuracy, was used to verify the data. Peer debriefing, in which colleagues provided feedback on the analysis, helped to improve the interpretation of the data. Triangulation, or the use of multiple data sources, was also employed to strengthen the validity of the findings. These strategies helped ensure that the research findings were credible and trustworthy.

8. Findings and Discussion

Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed the following four major findings:

- Code-switching as a tool for enhancing comprehension.
- Promoting learner engagement through code-switching.
- Challenges and risks in Second Language instruction.
- Teacher perspectives on the role of code-switching.

Theme 1: Code-switching as a Tool for Enhancing Comprehension: Teachers highlighted the effectiveness of code-switching in facilitating comprehension, especially for learners with limited English proficiency.

Participant C shared, "When I switch from English to Tshivenda during my lessons, I can see the faces of my learners light up because they are able to follow what I am teaching."

Participant D added, "Without Tshivenda, some learners would not grasp key ideas, particularly in subjects like Mathematics, where examples related to real-world applications help explain concepts better."

These responses indicate that teachers use code-switching to connect abstract or difficult content to learners' existing knowledge, making lessons more accessible. This observation is supported by Akinwumi (2022), who emphasizes code-switching as a scaffolding mechanism, helping learners process new material by reducing cognitive strain. Similarly, De Klerk (2020) notes that teaching in multilingual contexts benefits greatly from integrating L1, particularly when explaining abstract topics or complex terminology.

The findings suggest that teachers view code-switching as a critical instructional strategy, particularly in multilingual classrooms where learners are still developing English skills. While the practice fosters comprehension, teachers must ensure it is employed strategically to balance support in L1 with sufficient exposure to the target language, preventing over-reliance that could hinder long-term L2 acquisition.

Theme 2: Promoting Learner Engagement through Code-switching: Teachers expressed that incorporating learners' home languages during lessons significantly enhanced classroom participation.

Participant E shared, "When I mix Tshivenda with English, learners seem to enjoy the class more and participate without fear of making mistakes in English."

Participant F added, "Code-switching makes the classroom more engaging because learners connect better with the content and often respond positively, such as laughing when I use local expressions. It helps learners enjoy the class more, become actively involved, and better understand the material since I incorporate their home language."

These responses highlight that code-switching promotes a relaxed and inclusive atmosphere, encouraging learners to actively participate and interact. This aligns with Meyers (2021), who posits that code-switching fosters inclusivity, alleviating learner anxiety and boosting self-esteem. Githiora (2023) further emphasizes that the dialogic nature of code-switching transforms classrooms into interactive environments, enhancing learners' linguistic and cognitive skills.

The findings demonstrate that code-switching serves as a powerful socio-emotional tool, fostering a sense of belonging and validation among learners. By creating a supportive learning environment, code-switching motivates learners to engage actively, improving both their confidence in using the target language and their overall academic performance.

Theme 3: Challenges and Risks in Second Language Instruction: Participants identified potential drawbacks of code-switching when used excessively.

Participant G stated, "I notice that when I explain everything in Tshivenda, learners tend to rely on it and avoid attempting to answer in English, which I feel may affect their proficiency in the language."

Similarly, Participant H noted, "I have a challenge balancing the use of code-switching. If I use too much Tshivenda, it may affect learners' proficiency in English. On the other hand, if I use too little Tshivenda, they struggle to understand."

These responses reveal the difficulty in maintaining a balance between providing linguistic support and encouraging immersion in the target language. Akinwumi (2022) emphasizes that excessive use of learners' L1 can hinder second language acquisition by reducing learners' opportunities to engage with and internalize the L2. Meyers (2021) advocates for a strategic approach, where code-switching is used sparingly to enhance comprehension while ensuring ample exposure to the target language for proficiency development.

This theme underscores the complexity of code-switching in multilingual classrooms. While it is a valuable tool for aiding comprehension, overuse may lead to dependency on the L1, thereby limiting learners' L2 development. Teachers must employ a balanced approach, ensuring that code-switching supports, rather than substitutes, the target language learning process.

Theme 4: Teacher Perspectives on the Role of Code-switching: Teachers acknowledged the value of code-switching but highlighted the need for clearer guidance.

Participant I noted, "Code-switching is good for young children, but I feel unsure about how it should be used."

Participant J also shared, "I need to be trained to understand when and how to switch effectively to support learning. I am unsure about how code-switching works."

These responses suggest that while teachers see the benefits, they often face uncertainty in its application, emphasizing a gap in training. De Klerk (2020) underscores that professional development is critical in equipping teachers with practical strategies for managing code-switching. Githiora (2023) further explains that training ensures teachers use code-switching purposefully, enhancing its effectiveness in language and content instruction.

This theme highlights the necessity of professional development to optimize code-switching as a pedagogical tool. With proper training, teachers can strike a balance, using code-switching to enhance comprehension and language acquisition while avoiding overuse. Structured guidance can empower educators to implement this strategy more confidently and effectively.

The findings highlight the diverse role of code-switching in Foundation Phase classrooms. Teachers view it as an essential tool for enhancing comprehension and fostering learner engagement, particularly in multilingual settings. However, they also emphasize the challenges of managing its use to avoid over-reliance, which could hinder second language development. The recurring call for professional development underscores the need to equip educators with strategies to implement code-switching purposefully and effectively. Addressing these challenges through targeted training can ensure that code-switching remains a balanced and effective approach in supporting both linguistic and academic growth in young learners.

9. Conclusion

This article highlights the important role of code-switching as a useful teaching strategy in multilingual classrooms, especially in the Foundation Phase. The findings show that code-switching helps learners understand difficult concepts, particularly when their home language, such as Tshivenda, is used alongside English. Teachers noted that code-switching encourages learner participation and creates a more inclusive classroom environment, making students feel comfortable and confident. As a result, learners are more likely to engage with the lesson content and take part in class discussions, leading to better understanding.

The article also shows that code-switching not only improves comprehension but also supports positive social and emotional interactions. Learners feel more relaxed and are more willing to engage when they hear their home language being used, which helps reduce anxiety and builds their confidence. This link between language, culture, and participation highlights the importance of creating learning environments that respect and acknowledge learners' linguistic identities.

However, the article also points out some challenges related to code-switching. While it helps with understanding, too much reliance on a learner's first language may slow the development of second language skills, particularly in English. Finding a balance between using the home language for support and providing enough exposure to the second language is essential. Without this balance, there is a risk that learners' English proficiency may not improve, which is important for their academic success in a multilingual setting.

The article suggests that teacher training is crucial to make the most of code-switching. Teachers expressed the need for training on how to use code-switching in a balanced way, ensuring it supports learning without reducing exposure to the second language. Offering guidance on when and how to switch languages can help teachers improve their teaching practices and better support learners.

Code-switching is a valuable strategy for supporting comprehension and engagement in multilingual classrooms. However, more research is needed to explore its long-term effects on language proficiency and academic performance. Future studies should look into how code-switching impacts language development over time and whether it helps improve academic success in both the first and second languages. By filling these gaps, educators can better understand how to use code-switching in ways that benefit both language learning and overall academic achievement.

10. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that teacher training programs include strategies for using code-switching effectively to support multilingual learners, especially in the Foundation Phase. Teachers should be provided with practical guidance on how to balance the use of learners' home language and the second language to enhance understanding and engagement. This training would help teachers understand when and how to use code-switching as a helpful tool without over-relying on it. By doing so, teachers can better support learners' language development and create an inclusive classroom environment that values their cultural and linguistic identities.

It is also essential for teachers to use code-switching strategically to support learners' comprehension, especially when introducing complex or abstract concepts. By incorporating learners' home languages alongside the target language, teachers can bridge the gap between the familiar and the unfamiliar. This approach allows students to better understand difficult material while still being exposed to the second language. Teachers can use code-switching to explain concepts in a way that learners can relate to, making it easier for them to grasp the content. However, this should be done in a way that does not over-rely on the home language, as the ultimate goal is to help students become proficient in the second language.

A balanced approach to language exposure is also necessary to ensure that learners develop strong skills in both their home and second languages. While code-switching can be helpful for comprehension, excessive use of the home language may hinder the development of second language skills. Teachers must aim to create an environment where students receive adequate exposure to the second language, allowing them to gradually build proficiency while still offering support in their home language when necessary. This balanced approach will help learners develop both their first and second language skills, preparing them for academic success in a multilingual classroom.

References

- Akinwumi, O. (2022). Code-switching in Multilingual Classrooms: Bridging gaps in Language Learning. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 17(3), 89-104. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2021.1875063>
- De Klerk, V. (2020). Language use and Code-switching in Multilingual Classrooms in South Africa. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 33(1), 44-58. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2019.1635059>
- Githiora, C. (2023). Multilingualism in Education: Teacher Strategies for Inclusive Instruction. *Journal of Multilingual Education Research*, 15(2), 45-59. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573563.2023.119023>
- Lantolf, J.P. and Thorne, S.L. (2021). Sociocultural Theory and the Genesis of Second Language Development. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 41, 1-16. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190520000203>
- Meyers, R. (2021). Teaching Second Languages in Multilingual South African Classrooms: The Challenges of Multilingualism. *South African Journal of Education*, 41(2), 1-10. doi: <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v41n2a1829>
- Mkhize, Z. (2021). The Role of Code-switching in South African Primary School Classrooms. *Educational Linguistics*, 12(4), 35-49. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2233721420985456>
- Pillay, D. and Govender, D. (2023). Inclusive Teaching Strategies in Multilingual Classrooms: A South African Perspective. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 44(2), 149-163. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2085289>
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.

Cite this article as: Matodzi G. Sikhwari (2024). Exploring the Perceptions of Tshivenda-Speaking Foundation Phase Teachers on the Effectiveness of Code-Switching in Second Additional Language Instruction. *International Journal of Education and Teaching*, 4(2), 16-24. doi: [10.51483/IJEDT.4.2.2024.16-24](https://doi.org/10.51483/IJEDT.4.2.2024.16-24).