

TEACHER CODE-MIXING AS AN EFL PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGY: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

Code mixing is commonly used in multilingual English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms to facilitate communication and support students' understanding of learning materials. However, students' perceptions toward the use of code mixing in English teaching remain underexplored, particularly in Islamic senior high school contexts. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate students' perceptions of the use of code mixing in English teaching and explore its impacts on students' learning experiences at Islamic Senior High School Al Mubarak. This study employed a descriptive qualitative design. The participants consisted of 32 tenth-grade students, with six students selected for semi-structured interviews. Data were collected through a printed questionnaire and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the interactive model of data analysis, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that students perceived code mixing positively because it helped them understand learning materials, classroom instructions, listening activities, and unfamiliar vocabulary more easily. In the affective aspect, students reported feeling more comfortable, relaxed, and less anxious during English learning activities. In the conative aspect, code mixing increased students' confidence, motivation, and willingness to participate in classroom interactions. Furthermore, the findings indicated that code mixing facilitated comprehension, enriched vocabulary knowledge, reduced learning anxiety, and encouraged active participation in learning activities. These findings imply that English teachers in multilingual EFL classrooms may strategically use code mixing to support students' comprehension, foster classroom engagement, and create a more supportive learning environment, particularly for learners with limited English proficiency.

Keywords : code mixing, students' perceptions, English teaching, EFL classroom, multilingualism

INTRODUCTION

English is widely recognized as an international language and plays a crucial role in education, science, technology, and global communication. In Indonesia, English is taught as a Foreign Language (EFL), meaning that students have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom (Ramadhani et al., 2021). Consequently, many learners experience difficulties in understanding learning materials, mastering vocabulary, and communicating effectively in English. To address these challenges, English teachers often employ various instructional strategies to facilitate comprehension and support students' learning processes.

Indonesia is characterized by rich linguistic diversity, where students commonly use local languages and Bahasa Indonesia in their daily communication while learning

English as an additional language at school. This multilingual environment creates frequent interaction between students' first language (L1) and the target language (L2) during classroom activities. Recent studies on bilingual pedagogy and translanguaging have shown that the strategic use of students' first language can facilitate comprehension, promote classroom interaction, and support meaningful learning in multilingual classrooms (Zakharova & Lasagabaster, 2026). In many Indonesian EFL classrooms, teachers utilize bilingual instructional practices by combining English and Bahasa Indonesia to explain difficult concepts, clarify meanings, and provide classroom instructions. According to Kurniawan et al. (2025), multilingualism enables individuals to use more than one language in communication and significantly influences language practices in educational settings. Therefore, the use of bilingual strategies has become a common practice in EFL classrooms to support students' understanding and participation.

One bilingual strategy frequently used in multilingual EFL classrooms is code mixing. Code mixing refers to the incorporation of elements from two or more languages within a single utterance during communication (Fadliyah et al., 2023). In English language teaching, teachers often combine English and Bahasa Indonesia when introducing unfamiliar vocabulary, explaining complex materials, clarifying instructions, and facilitating classroom interaction. The use of code mixing is intended to reduce communication barriers and assist students in understanding learning content more effectively. Iswari et al. (2025) argued that the strategic use of students' first language can help teachers deliver complex information more effectively, particularly for learners with limited proficiency in the target language.

Despite its widespread use, the implementation of code mixing remains a topic of discussion among language educators and researchers. Some scholars argue that code mixing facilitates comprehension, increases students' confidence, and creates a more supportive learning environment. On the other hand, excessive reliance on the first language may reduce students' exposure to English and limit opportunities for meaningful language practice (Susanto & Jelimun, 2023). Therefore, investigating students' responses toward the use of code mixing is important to determine whether this instructional strategy contributes positively to the teaching and learning process.

Students' perceptions play an important role in evaluating the effectiveness of instructional practices. Walgito (2010) defines perception as the process through which individuals receive, organize, and interpret information from their environment. In educational settings, students' perceptions can influence their attitudes, motivation, confidence, classroom participation, and overall learning experiences. Consequently, examining students' perceptions toward code mixing can provide valuable insights into how learners respond to bilingual instructional practices in EFL classrooms.

Previous studies have consistently reported positive contributions of code mixing in English language teaching. Habso (2025); Fithriani (2023), and Indriyani (2023) found that code mixing facilitated students' comprehension, supported classroom communication, and assisted teachers in managing classroom interaction. Similarly, Afzaal (2022) reported that students perceived bilingual instructional practices positively because they enhanced comprehension and reduced learning difficulties. These studies collectively suggest that code mixing can function as a supportive instructional strategy in foreign language learning contexts.

However, most previous studies have primarily focused on the functions of code mixing and teachers' classroom practices rather than students' perceptions. In addition, studies examining students' perceptions through cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions remain limited, particularly in Islamic senior high school contexts. Furthermore, research investigating students' perceptions of code mixing at Islamic Senior High School Al Mubarak has not yet been conducted. This indicates a gap in the existing literature that requires further investigation. Therefore, this study aims to investigate students' perceptions of the use of code mixing in English teaching and explore its impacts on students' learning experiences at Islamic Senior High School Al Mubarak. The novelty of this study lies in its examination of students' perceptions through Walgito's cognitive, affective, and conative framework within an Islamic senior high school EFL context. In addition, this study integrates questionnaire and semi-structured interview data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions toward the use of code mixing in English teaching. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on bilingual instructional practices and provide practical insights for English teachers working in multilingual EFL classrooms.

METHOD

1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design. The design was considered appropriate because the objective of the study was to explore and describe students' perceptions of the use of code mixing in the English teaching process. Since perception is a subjective phenomenon that involves students' opinions, feelings, and experiences, it could not be adequately explained through numerical data alone Creswell & Creswell (2023). Therefore, a descriptive qualitative approach was used to obtain in-depth information regarding how students perceived the use of code mixing and how it influenced their learning experiences. This study focused on describing students' perceptions based on the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions proposed by Walgito (2010).

Table 1. Questionnaire Blueprint

Aspect of Perception	Indicator	Item Numbers	Total Items
Cognitive	Understanding learning materials, classroom instructions, listening activities, productive skills, and vocabulary	1–10	10
Affective	Comfort and enjoyment during learning activities	11–12	2
Conative	Motivation, confidence, and participation	13–15	3

4. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. Prior to collecting the data, the researcher obtained permission from the school and coordinated with the English teacher regarding the research schedule. The questionnaire was administered in a printed format and distributed directly to 32 students during classroom learning activities. The students were asked to complete the questionnaire individually based on their experiences regarding the use of code mixing in English teaching. After all questionnaires had been collected and reviewed, six students were purposively selected to participate in semi-structured interviews.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face to obtain more detailed information about students' perceptions and experiences related to the use of code mixing in the classroom. With the participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Before participating in the study, students were informed about the purpose of the research and assured that their responses would remain confidential and would only be used for academic purposes. Participation was voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences.

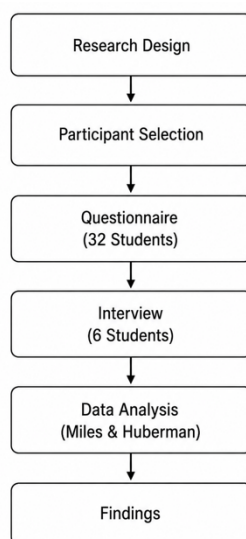


Figure 1. Procedure of the study

5. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles & Huberman (1994), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, relevant information from the questionnaires and interview transcripts was selected, organized, and categorized according to the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of perception. The reduced data were then presented in tables and narrative descriptions to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying recurring patterns and themes and by comparing findings obtained from both instruments. Data triangulation was applied to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

A. Students' Perceptions of Code Mixing in English Teaching

The questionnaire and interview findings revealed that students held positive perceptions toward the use of code mixing in English teaching. Based on Walgito (2010) perception framework, students' perceptions were categorized into cognitive, affective, and conative aspects. The questionnaire results showed that the cognitive aspect obtained the highest average score ($M = 3.39$), followed by the affective aspect ($M = 3.40$) and the conative aspect ($M = 3.24$). These findings indicate that students perceived code mixing positively in terms of understanding learning materials, emotional responses, and classroom participation.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of Code Mixing in English Teaching

No	Perception Aspect	Mean Score	Category
1	Cognitive	3.39	Very Positive
2	Affective	3.40	Very Positive
3	Conative	3.24	Positive

In the cognitive aspect, students reported that code mixing helped them understand learning materials, teacher explanations, classroom instructions, listening activities, and vocabulary. The highest score was found in the statement "Students learn vocabulary more easily" ($M = 3.59$), where 65.62% of students strongly agreed and 28.12% agreed with the statement. In addition, 56.25% of students strongly agreed that code mixing made learning materials easier to understand. Interview findings supported these results, as students explained that the use of Bahasa Indonesia alongside English helped them understand lessons more clearly and reduced misunderstandings during classroom interaction.

Regarding the affective aspect, the average score was 3.40, indicating a very positive perception. Most students reported feeling comfortable and happy during

English learning activities when teachers used code mixing. Specifically, 43.75% of students strongly agreed and 53.12% agreed that code mixing made them feel happy during learning activities. Interview data further revealed that students felt less anxious and more relaxed because they could understand the lesson more easily.

In terms of the conative aspect, the average score was 3.24, indicating a positive perception. The statement “Students become more motivated to learn English” obtained the highest score ($M = 3.50$), with 59.38% of students strongly agreeing and 31.25% agreeing. Furthermore, students reported becoming more confident and more willing to ask and answer questions during classroom interaction. These findings were also reflected in the interview data, where participants stated that understanding the lesson more clearly increased their confidence and encouraged them to participate actively in classroom activities.

B. Impacts of Code Mixing on Students’ Learning Experiences

The findings indicated that code mixing had several positive impacts on students’ learning experiences. First, it improved students’ understanding of learning materials, as reflected in the cognitive aspect ($M = 3.39$). Most students agreed that code mixing helped them understand teacher explanations, classroom instructions, listening materials, and unfamiliar vocabulary. Second, code mixing contributed to positive emotional responses during learning activities. The affective aspect obtained the highest average score ($M = 3.40$), indicating that students felt more comfortable, relaxed, and less anxious when teachers combined English and Bahasa Indonesia during instruction. Third, code mixing positively influenced students’ classroom participation. The conative aspect obtained an average score of 3.24, showing that students became more motivated, confident, and willing to participate in classroom interaction. Interview findings further confirmed that students were more likely to ask questions, answer questions, and express their opinions when they clearly understood the lesson. Overall, the findings suggest that code mixing facilitated comprehension, supported vocabulary development, reduced learning anxiety, and encouraged active participation in English learning activities.

Discussion

The findings revealed that students held positive perceptions toward the use of code mixing in English teaching, as reflected in the cognitive, affective, and conative aspects of perception. The questionnaire results showed that the cognitive aspect obtained a very positive mean score ($M = 3.39$), followed by the affective aspect ($M = 3.40$) and the conative aspect ($M = 3.24$). These findings suggest that code mixing functions not only as a communication strategy but also as a pedagogical tool that supports students’ learning experiences in EFL classrooms.

From the cognitive perspective, students perceived code mixing as helpful for understanding learning materials, teacher explanations, classroom instructions, listening activities, and unfamiliar vocabulary. This finding may be explained by the fact that many students still experience difficulties when learning entirely through English. The use of Bahasa Indonesia enabled students to connect new information with their existing knowledge, thereby reducing misunderstandings and facilitating comprehension. In particular, the highest mean score was found in the statement that code mixing helped students learn vocabulary more easily ($M = 3.59$). This indicates that students benefited from bilingual explanations when encountering unfamiliar words and concepts. This finding supports Cook (2016), who argues that learners' first language can facilitate second language learning by linking prior knowledge to new linguistic input. Similarly, Habso (2025) found that code mixing helped students understand learning materials and improved classroom communication.

The findings also demonstrated positive affective responses toward the use of code mixing. Students reported feeling more comfortable, relaxed, and less anxious during English learning activities. This result may be attributed to the reduction of language-related pressure when students were allowed to access explanations in Bahasa Indonesia. When students understood the lesson more clearly, they felt less worried about making mistakes and more comfortable participating in classroom activities. The affective aspect obtained the highest average score ($M = 3.40$), indicating that emotional comfort played an important role in students' perceptions. This finding is consistent with Afzaal (2022), who reported that bilingual instructional practices reduced learning difficulties and supported classroom communication.

Regarding the conative aspect, students demonstrated positive behavioral responses toward the use of code mixing. Students became more motivated, confident, and willing to participate in classroom interaction because they understood the lesson more clearly. The use of Bahasa Indonesia reduced uncertainty and encouraged students to ask questions, answer questions, and express their opinions. These findings suggest that comprehension and confidence are closely related; when students understand the content being discussed, they are more likely to engage actively in learning activities. This finding is consistent with Fithriani (2023) and Indriyani (2023), who highlighted the role of code mixing in facilitating classroom interaction and increasing student participation.

An important finding of this study is related to its context, namely an Islamic Senior High School (Madrasah Aliyah). In this context, students learn English as a foreign language while primarily using Bahasa Indonesia in their academic and daily communication. As a result, students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. This condition makes code mixing particularly useful because it functions as a bridge between the students' first language and the target language. The use of Bahasa

Indonesia alongside English helped students access learning materials more easily without eliminating their exposure to English. Therefore, code mixing served as a form of instructional scaffolding that supported learning while maintaining students' engagement in classroom interaction. Overall, the findings indicate that code mixing positively influenced students' learning experiences by facilitating comprehension, supporting vocabulary development, reducing learning anxiety, increasing motivation, and encouraging active classroom participation. These findings suggest that code mixing can be strategically employed by English teachers in Madrasah Aliyah and other multilingual EFL contexts as a supportive instructional strategy rather than a replacement for target language use.

CONCLUSION

This study explored students' perceptions of the use of code mixing in the English teaching process at Islamic Senior High School Al Mubarak and its impacts on students' learning experiences. The findings indicate that students perceived code mixing positively across the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of perception. Code mixing functioned as a supportive instructional strategy that helped students understand learning materials more easily, feel more comfortable during classroom interaction, and participate more actively in learning activities. The findings suggest that the use of students' first language alongside English can facilitate foreign language learning by providing instructional scaffolding that supports comprehension, reduces learning anxiety, and encourages classroom participation. These findings reinforce the view that the first language can serve as a valuable pedagogical resource in EFL classrooms, particularly for learners with limited English proficiency.

Practically, the findings imply that English teachers may use code mixing strategically to support students' understanding while maintaining meaningful exposure to the target language. In the context of Islamic Senior High Schools and similar multilingual EFL settings, code mixing can be used to bridge students' existing linguistic knowledge and new language input. This study was limited to one class consisting of 32 students at a single Islamic Senior High School, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. In addition, the study focused on students' perceptions rather than measuring the direct effects of code mixing on language achievement. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve larger participant groups, different educational settings, and investigate the relationship between code mixing and specific language skills, such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

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