CODE SWITCHING AS A TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY: OPINIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY-LEVEL STUDENTS OF FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (FFL) IN GHANA

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INTRODUCTION

The ongoing debate on code switching (CS) in multilingual societies and foreign language (FL) classes is still relevant and worth considering. While some scholars propose that interactions between learners and instructors in the FL class be carried out only in the target language, other experts favour a careful blend of both the target language and source language. This study focuses on university students' perceptions of code switching between English as the source language and French as a foreign language (FFL) during the teaching and instruction of the latter.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to:

- Identify the role that CS plays in the target language class.
- Gather students' opinions and perspectives on CS as a teaching and learning strategy.

METHODOLOGY

- **Population**: 36 university level FFL students
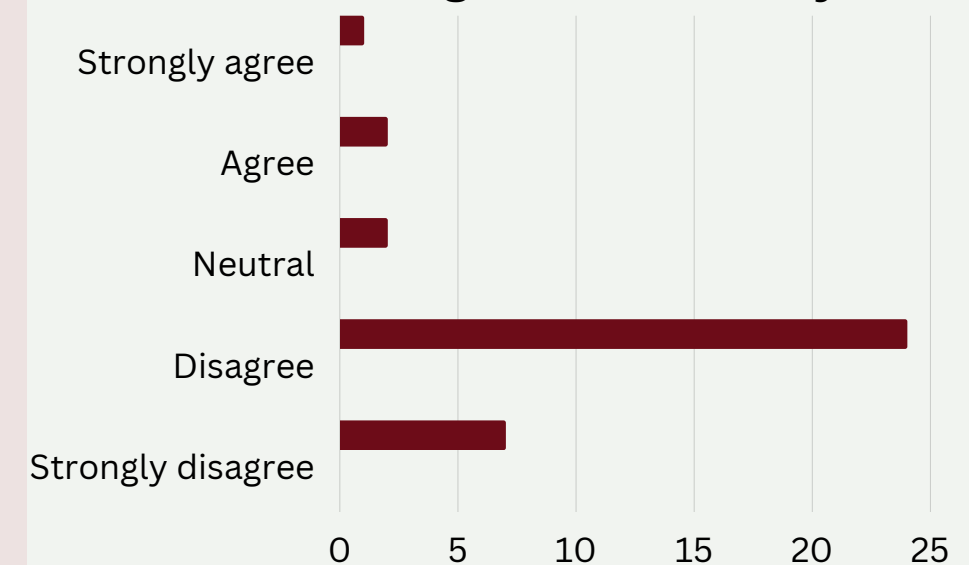- **Method:** Classroom observations and questionnaires

FINDINGS

1. The role of CS in the FL class

- Checking for understanding
- Clarifications and repetitions
- Explanation of linguistic elements
- Giving students feedback on tasks
- Giving instructions for students' tasks
- General classroom communication
- Compensatory strategy in classroom communications
- Vocabulary building strategy

2. Students' perspectives on CS as a teaching and learning strategy

- "I think it is important for my lecturer to teach in both French and English because it bridges the cultural gap and makes learning the language more relatable." - **Student**
- "I feel when they (teachers) use both French and English, I am able to map out what words mean what and helps (me) pick up faster." - **Student**

Students' opinion that French lessons should be taught in French only.

CONCLUSION

Generally, students attested to better retention of concepts in the target language when there was a good blend of both languages. It is recommended that language instructors resort to CS periodically in order to ensure good levels of understanding and engagement of the FL learners in the classroom.