
CODE-SWITCHING, TRANSLANGUAGING, AND LINGUISTIC IDENTITY IN MULTILINGUAL ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

This qualitative case study examines how code-switching and translanguaging operate in multilingual Arabic language classrooms and how they shape learners' linguistic identity. Grounded in sociolinguistic variation theory and translanguaging perspectives, the study was conducted in an Arabic Language Education programme at an Indonesian university. Participants were 25 undergraduate students and 2 instructors. Data were collected through six classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with ten students and two instructors, and analysis of instructional documents. The findings show that learners shifted among Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, English, and local languages when they faced lexical, grammatical, or conceptual difficulty. Instructors also used strategic code-switching to clarify Arabic concepts and sustain participation. These practices supported comprehension, reduced anxiety, and enabled students to negotiate academic, religious, and social identities. Arabic was associated with pride, religious affiliation, and academic belonging, whereas rigid Arabic-only expectations sometimes limited participation. The study argues that selective code-switching and translanguaging can function as pedagogical resources when they support, rather than replace, Arabic proficiency development.

Keywords: code-switching; translanguaging; linguistic identity; multilingual classrooms; Arabic learning

Abstrak

Penelitian studi kasus kualitatif ini mengkaji bagaimana alih kode dan translanguaging berlangsung dalam kelas bahasa Arab multibahasa serta bagaimana keduanya membentuk identitas linguistik mahasiswa. Berlandaskan teori variasi sosiolinguistik dan perspektif translanguaging, penelitian dilakukan pada program Pendidikan Bahasa Arab di sebuah universitas di Indonesia. Partisipan terdiri atas 25 mahasiswa sarjana dan 2 dosen. Data dikumpulkan melalui enam observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan sepuluh mahasiswa dan dua dosen, serta analisis dokumen pembelajaran. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa berpindah antara bahasa Arab, Bahasa Indonesia, bahasa Inggris, dan bahasa daerah ketika menghadapi kesulitan leksikal, gramatikal, atau konseptual. Dosen juga menggunakan alih kode secara strategis untuk menjelaskan konsep bahasa Arab dan menjaga partisipasi kelas. Praktik ini membantu pemahaman, mengurangi kecemasan, dan memungkinkan mahasiswa menegosiasikan identitas akademik, religius, dan sosial. Bahasa Arab dikaitkan dengan kebanggaan, afiliasi religius, dan keberadaan akademik, sedangkan tuntutan penggunaan bahasa Arab secara kaku kadang membatasi partisipasi. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa alih kode dan translanguaging yang selektif dapat menjadi sumber pedagogis apabila mendukung, bukan menggantikan, pengembangan kemahiran bahasa Arab.

Kata kunci: alih kode; translanguaging; identitas linguistik; kelas multibahasa; pembelajaran bahasa Arab

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Introduction

Language is not only a medium of communication; it is also a resource through which social identity is constructed and negotiated. In multilingual contexts, speakers use accent, dialect, language choice, and speech style to mark group membership, educational background, and cultural affiliation. These markers are dynamic rather than fixed because they are continually reshaped through interaction and adaptation across sociocultural settings (Li, 2018; Darvin & Norton, 2021). Recent studies also link multilingual identity to learners' academic engagement and attainment, while motivation to learn languages beyond global English is shaped by identity, symbolic value, and imagined future selves (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017; Rutgers et al., 2024). Identity in multilingual settings is therefore best understood as an ongoing process of positioning through communicative practice.

Code-switching is one visible expression of this process. It is commonly defined as the alternation between two or more languages within a single communicative event. In classroom settings, code-switching may clarify meaning, compensate for limited linguistic resources, reduce anxiety, and sustain interaction (Caballero & Celaya, 2022; Al Tale' & AlQahtani, 2022; Gwee & Saravanan, 2018; Temesgen, 2022; Yıldız & Su-Bergil, 2021). In Arabic language learning, teachers and learners often draw on Arabic, English, and other available languages to negotiate meaning, explain complex forms, and maintain the flow of interaction (Kawafha & Al Masaeed, 2023; Alsalam, 2025). Such practices support communication while also shaping learners' confidence, participation, and sense of belonging.

The literature on multilingual classrooms can be organised into three main strands. The first examines the communicative and pedagogical functions of code-switching, particularly its contribution to comprehension and classroom interaction (Al Tale' & AlQahtani, 2022; Alsalam, 2025; Temesgen, 2022). The second links language use with affective experience and linguistic identity, focusing on how learners negotiate belonging, confidence, anxiety, and social positioning (Darvin & Norton, 2021; Dewaele et al., 2018; Naska, 2024). The third adopts a translanguaging perspective, which understands multilingual practice as fluid and integrated rather than as a simple alternation between separate linguistic systems (Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021; Fang et al., 2022; Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021; Leung & Valdés, 2019; MacSwan, 2017).

Although previous studies have examined the forms, functions, and pedagogical roles of code-switching in bilingual and multilingual classrooms, the evidence remains concentrated in English-dominant or general bilingual education settings. Research has considered intra-sentential and inter-sentential switching, as well as the influence of proficiency, interactional modality, and classroom goals (Caballero & Celaya, 2022; Fang et al., 2022). Less attention has been paid to how code-switching shapes linguistic identity in Arabic as a foreign language, despite evidence that L2 Arabic classrooms involve complex multilingual and multidialectal practices (Kawafha & Al Masaeed, 2023; An, 2024). The Indonesian context makes this gap especially relevant because Arabic learning takes place alongside local languages, Bahasa Indonesia, and English. Studies of Arabic learning motivation in the Gulf and translanguaging practices in Indonesian EFL classrooms indicate that language identity is shaped through the interaction of local, national, religious, and global linguistic resources (Calafato & Tang, 2019; Liando et al., 2023). How Indonesian learners position themselves as Arabic users therefore requires closer examination (Naska, 2024).

A second limitation concerns the weak integration of code-switching and translanguaging perspectives. Translanguaging theory conceptualises multilingual speakers as drawing on a unified linguistic repertoire rather than moving between rigidly separated language systems (Li, 2018; Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021; MacSwan, 2017). Although this perspective has been widely used in bilingual education research, its application to Arabic language learning is still developing. It offers a broader account of how learners mobilise linguistic resources to construct meaning and identity simultaneously (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; Leung & Valdés, 2019). Yet code-switching, translanguaging, and linguistic identity are still often discussed as separate analytical concerns, especially in studies of Arabic as a foreign language.

Responding to these gaps, this study investigates code-switching practices and their relationship with learners' linguistic identity in a multilingual Arabic language classroom in Indonesia. It addresses three questions: (1) How does code-switching appear in classroom interaction? (2) How does it affect learners' linguistic identity and sense of belonging? and (3) What pedagogical implications does it offer for sociolinguistically responsive Arabic instruction?

The study contributes by integrating code-switching and translanguaging perspectives in the context of Arabic as a foreign language in Indonesia. While many earlier studies focus on English-based bilingual settings, this article examines a classroom in which local, national, religious, and global language resources intersect. By linking classroom language practices with identity construction, the study explains how multilingual Arabic learners manage their linguistic repertoires and offers practical implications for more inclusive and adaptive Arabic curricula.

Sociolinguistic variation theory is used to examine how language choice reflects contextual demands and social positioning in classroom interaction. Translanguaging theory is used to interpret how learners mobilise their full linguistic repertoire in constructing meaning and identity (Albirini, 2016; Li, 2018). These frameworks guide the analysis of language alternation, hybrid utterances, and identity positioning across classroom discourse and interview data.

Method

This study used a qualitative case study design to examine code-switching in Arabic language classrooms and its relationship with learners' linguistic identity. A case study design was appropriate because it allows language practices to be examined in their natural context and captures the complexity of multilingual interaction and identity construction (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research was conducted in an Arabic Language Education programme at an Islamic university in Indonesia, where Arabic is taught as a foreign language with linguistic and religious orientations. The observed course was an intermediate-level class on grammar and reading comprehension in which students were expected to participate in Arabic-based instruction. The classroom was multilingual: Arabic functioned as the target language, Bahasa Indonesia as the national language, English as a global academic language, and local languages as resources in informal interaction. The participants were 25 undergraduate students, consisting of 15 female and 10 male students aged 18 to 22, and two Arabic language instructors. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who actively engaged in classroom interaction and demonstrated multilingual language use, so that the data captured authentic instances of code-switching and identity negotiation (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Data were gathered through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Six classroom sessions, each lasting approximately 90 minutes, were audio-recorded to capture naturally occurring language use. The observations focused on moments when students shifted between Arabic and other languages during instructional and interactional activities. Semi-structured interviews with ten students and two instructors explored their views on the role of code-switching in language learning and identity formation. Course syllabi, instructional materials, and students' written assignments were also examined to identify patterns of language use and related pedagogical practices.

The data were analysed through thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases: familiarisation with the data, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and reporting. Coding was conducted inductively, producing categories such as "clarification switching," "identity expression," and "pedagogical scaffolding."

Trustworthiness was strengthened through triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, an audit trail, and researcher reflexivity. Observation, interview, and document data were compared to check the consistency of the interpretations. Selected interpretations were confirmed with participants, while discussions with fellow researchers helped reduce interpretive bias. An audit trail documented key analytical decisions, and reflexive notes were used to monitor the researchers' assumptions during interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

Results and Discussion

Code-Switching as a Strategy for Comprehension and Interaction

Code-switching functioned primarily as a strategic resource for comprehension and classroom interaction. It was not a random feature of multilingual speech but a practical response to learning difficulties. Students moved between Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, and English when they encountered problems with vocabulary, grammar, or conceptual understanding. This flexibility reflects multilingual competence, in which learners draw on several linguistic resources to achieve communicative goals (Caballero & Celaya, 2022; Al Tale' & AlQahtani, 2022; Gwee & Saravanan, 2018; Temesgen, 2022).

The utterance "*Ana la afhamu ... maksudnya apa, Miss?*" illustrates this pattern. The student began in Arabic and then shifted to Bahasa Indonesia to request clarification. The shift helped resolve a comprehension gap and prevented communication from breaking down. Rather than showing linguistic failure, the utterance shows how learners use available language resources to keep interaction moving (Caballero & Celaya, 2022).

Similar patterns appeared across several classroom exchanges. During a grammar discussion, one student said, "*Kalau fi'l mudhāri' itu present kan*, like ongoing action," combining Bahasa Indonesia and English to clarify an Arabic grammatical concept. In another exchange, a student used a local language before returning to Arabic: "*Ini maksudnya apa sih, agak bingung aku.*" These examples show that students used national, global, and local languages as immediate cognitive support during moments of uncertainty.

Teacher discourse showed the same pattern. When explaining complex linguistic concepts, instructors used more than one language to scaffold understanding. For example, one teacher

explained, “The verb here is *fi’l māḍī* (past tense). It is similar to the simple past in English.” In another instance, the teacher stated, “*Al-qirā’ah itu reading, jadi kalian harus memahami teks.*” Across the observed sessions, instructors tended to introduce concepts in Arabic, shift to Bahasa Indonesia when students appeared hesitant, and then return to Arabic practice. This sequence suggests purposeful pedagogical switching. Similar studies report that teachers use language alternation to clarify meaning, support participation, and connect new forms with learners’ existing knowledge (Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021; Yuvayapan, 2019). By linking Arabic structures with familiar linguistic references, teachers helped students grasp abstract concepts more effectively (Alsalam, 2025).

These classroom patterns helped sustain interaction. In a class where students had different levels of Arabic proficiency, switching between languages created wider opportunities for participation. Students with limited Arabic proficiency might otherwise withdraw because of anxiety or fear of error. Across the data, switching occurred most often during the explanation of abstract concepts, requests for clarification, and moments of communicative breakdown. This recurrence indicates a stable interactional pattern rather than isolated language mixing.

Cognitively, code-switching supported meaning-making and knowledge construction. When students struggled to process information in Arabic, familiar languages mediated understanding. Language learning in this context did not appear as a simple movement from one language to another, but as an integrative process in which several linguistic resources supported comprehension. Research on first-language use and pedagogical translanguaging likewise suggests that learners’ familiar languages can support deeper processing when used selectively and purposefully (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Al Tale’ & AlQahtani, 2022; Cenoz & Gorter, 2022).

Sociolinguistically, students adjusted their language choices according to the demands of the situation, the goal of communication, and their relationship with interlocutors. Bahasa Indonesia often indexed shared understanding among peers, whereas Arabic indexed engagement with the target language and the academic task. This adaptive use of language supports the view that linguistic variation is shaped by social context and communicative intent, not by deviation from linguistic norms (Albirini, 2016).

Code-switching also helped students manage classroom interaction. It allowed them to initiate, maintain, and repair communication when Arabic alone was not sufficient. In collaborative activities, this function was especially important because sustained interaction was needed for knowledge construction. By allowing learners to express ideas more fully, code-switching supported a more interactive and dialogic learning environment (Zimmerman, 2020).

These practices also reflect everyday multilingual communication in Indonesia, where language boundaries are often fluid. The classroom therefore became a space in which ordinary multilingual practices were adapted for educational purposes. This observation challenges monolingual assumptions that prioritise exclusive use of the target language and suggests that multilingual practices can be mobilised as learning resources.

The affective dimension was equally important. The use of familiar languages reduced anxiety and increased confidence, particularly among students with lower Arabic proficiency. Anxiety can hinder participation, while supportive classroom conditions can encourage learners to take risks,

ask questions, and sustain interaction. Research on foreign language enjoyment and anxiety similarly shows that classroom emotions are shaped by learner variables and teacher-related factors, including the extent to which instruction supports communication (Dewaele et al., 2018). In this study, code-switching contributed to both cognitive understanding and a more supportive learning atmosphere (Albirini, 2016).

This does not mean that code-switching should be unrestricted. Strategic switching can strengthen comprehension and interaction, but excessive reliance on non-target languages may reduce exposure to Arabic and slow proficiency development. A balanced approach is therefore needed: code-switching should support learning without replacing meaningful Arabic use. This position is consistent with recent research on principled use of learners' linguistic resources in language education (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022).

Taken together, the data position code-switching as a central resource in multilingual Arabic classrooms. It helped learners overcome linguistic difficulties, maintain communication, and participate more actively. It also reflected the adaptive and context-dependent nature of multilingual language use. For Arabic instruction, the implication is clear: code-switching should not be treated as deficiency, but as a pedagogical resource that must be used selectively and purposefully.

Multilingual Repertoires and the Emergence of Translanguaging

Students also drew flexibly on their multilingual repertoires by integrating Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, English, and local languages in their communicative practices. Rather than treating these languages as separate systems, they combined them dynamically to construct meaning and sustain interaction. Similar practices have been reported in Indonesian classrooms, where learners move among English, Indonesian, and local languages as part of classroom participation and meaning-making (Liando et al., 2023). This flexibility reflects multilingual competence as the ability to mobilise an entire linguistic repertoire in response to communicative demands.

The student statement "Sometimes it's easier to say it in English, because the Arabic word is new for me" shows how English mediated lexical gaps in Arabic. Another hybrid utterance, "*Al-khilāfah itu* system of government, kayak democracy but with sharia rules," shows how learners blended several languages within a single communicative act. Such practices resonate with research on multilingual and multidialectal translanguaging in L2 Arabic classrooms, where learners and teachers use available linguistic resources to support comprehension and participation (Kawafha & Al Masaeed, 2023).

Other classroom examples confirmed this pattern. One student explained, "*Al-jumlah ini seperti sentence, tapi dalam Arabic ada i'rāb-nya*," combining Arabic terminology with English and Bahasa Indonesia. Another stated, "*Ini verb-nya berubah karena ada dhamir, jadi beda bentuk*," using Indonesian explanation to process Arabic grammar. These examples show learners mobilising their full linguistic repertoire in ways consistent with translanguaging as a practical theory of language (Li, 2018; Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021).

Students' written notes also showed translanguaging. Examples such as "*fi'l māḍī = past tense (sudah terjadi)*" and "*mudhāri' = present (sedang berlangsung)*" indicate that multilingual

integration extended beyond oral interaction into academic literacy practices. Translanguaging therefore operated not only as a communicative strategy but also as a cognitive strategy for organising and internalising new linguistic knowledge.

Local languages occasionally entered classroom discourse as well. One student remarked informally, “*Ini susah banget, tapi kayaknya sama kayak bahasa kita,*” before reformulating the idea in Arabic. This example shows that learners used local linguistic resources, alongside national and global languages, to mediate understanding.

These examples point to more than simple alternation between separate language systems. Students engaged in fluid and integrated language practices characteristic of translanguaging. Code-switching usually refers to a shift from one language to another, whereas translanguaging emphasises the simultaneous activation of multiple linguistic resources in one communicative process. This distinction matters because translanguaging represents a pedagogical and ideological shift: multilingual meaning-making is understood as a holistic practice rather than as movement between separate codes (Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021; MacSwan, 2017).

Theoretically, the data align with translanguaging theory, which sees multilingual speakers as drawing from a unified repertoire. Learners did not compartmentalise their languages; they combined them to achieve communicative and cognitive goals. Translanguaging was especially visible when learners encountered unfamiliar vocabulary or complex grammatical structures (Li, 2018; Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021; Leung & Valdés, 2019; Tai & Wei, 2021).

The recurrence of translanguaging during explanation, clarification, and note-taking shows that it was not peripheral to learning. It functioned as a systematic strategy that helped learners connect new Arabic forms with knowledge they already possessed. This pattern supports the argument that multilingual practices are integral to language learning rather than deviations from it.

Analytically, the distinction between code-switching and translanguaging remains useful. In this study, code-switching tended to appear as a functional shift between languages for specific communicative purposes. Translanguaging, by contrast, involved a more fluid integration of linguistic resources. Keeping this distinction allows the complexity of multilingual practice in Arabic classrooms to be described more precisely.

Overall, translanguaging shaped students’ learning experiences by enabling them to construct meaning, support comprehension, and participate more confidently. It should therefore be recognised as a pedagogical resource that supports both cognitive processing and classroom communication in multilingual Arabic learning.

Code-Switching and the Negotiation of Linguistic Identity

Code-switching also shaped learners’ linguistic identity. Students did not use different languages only for functional communication; their language choices were tied to how they positioned themselves socially, academically, and religiously. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that multilingual identity, motivation, and the symbolic value of particular languages influence learners’ engagement and self-positioning in language learning (Calafato & Tang, 2019; Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017; Rutgers et al., 2024).

Students associated Arabic with prestige, academic competence, and religious identity. One participant stated, “When I use Arabic in front of my classmates, I feel more confident and closer to Islamic knowledge.” Another said, “Speaking Arabic makes me feel like I am really learning something important.” These statements suggest that Arabic functioned as a marker of intellectual and spiritual belonging and contributed to learners’ sense of achievement. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that Arabic can mark Muslim religious identity in Indonesian sociocultural contexts (Naska, 2024).

Yet students did not experience Arabic use uniformly. Several participants reported anxiety and hesitation when they were expected to use Arabic exclusively. One student explained, “Sometimes I understand, but I’m afraid to speak because I might be wrong.” Another noted, “If everything is in Arabic, I get confused and prefer to stay silent.” These statements show the tension between aspiration and competence and indicate that strict monolingual expectations may reduce participation for some learners.

Bahasa Indonesia, by contrast, provided comfort, familiarity, and communicative ease. Many students felt more confident when they could use their first language. As one participant stated, “I feel less nervous when I explain in Bahasa Indonesia because I can express my ideas more clearly.” The first language therefore functioned as affective support that enabled more active participation.

Some students held ambivalent views. They valued code-switching for comprehension but worried that it might limit Arabic development. One participant explained, “Using Indonesian helps me understand, but I also think I should try more Arabic.” Another stated, “Sometimes I mix languages because it’s easier, but I know it might slow my progress.” These responses reveal a tension between immediate understanding and long-term proficiency.

A few students preferred stricter Arabic use. One participant commented, “If we always use Indonesian, we will not improve our Arabic.” These negative cases are important because they show that learners’ views were not uniform. Students recognised the benefits of multilingual practice while also remaining aware of the need for sustained Arabic exposure.

Observation data confirmed that identity was negotiated in real time. Students often initiated communication in Arabic and then shifted to Bahasa Indonesia when they encountered difficulty. For example, one student began answering a question in Arabic but switched to Indonesian mid-sentence to complete the explanation. This pattern shows how learners balanced the aspiration to perform as Arabic users with the need to communicate clearly.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, identity is constructed through interaction rather than fixed in advance (Darvin & Norton, 2021). Code-switching mediated movement between different identity positions. It allowed learners to align themselves with the prestige and symbolic value of Arabic while also maintaining confidence through familiar languages. This dynamic positioning is consistent with studies showing that multilingual learners construct identities through flexible repertoires across institutional, local, and transnational contexts (Leung & Valdés, 2019; Rutgers et al., 2024).

The data also point to the relationship between language, identity, and power. Arabic carried authority as a language of religion and academic knowledge, whereas Bahasa Indonesia and local languages functioned as more accessible resources for inclusion and interaction. Code-switching

enabled learners to move between these linguistic spaces and access both symbolic capital and communicative effectiveness.

Thus, code-switching was closely connected to the negotiation of linguistic identity. It helped learners balance competing identity positions, manage anxiety, and participate more actively. Instead of signalling linguistic deficiency, it represented learner agency in a complex sociolinguistic and educational setting.

Pedagogical Implications of Code-Switching in Multilingual Classrooms

Code-switching also had clear pedagogical value in Arabic instruction. In the observed multilingual classroom, it was used as a deliberate instructional strategy to facilitate comprehension, strengthen engagement, and support language development. Instructors aligned their language choices with students' needs, proficiency levels, and the complexity of the material.

A central pedagogical function of code-switching was scaffolding. Teachers alternated between Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, and English to clarify meaning and connect new concepts with students' existing knowledge. The triadic example "*Al-maktabah perpustakaan* library" shows how an Arabic lexical item was linked with its equivalents in the national and global languages. This strategy supported comprehension and strengthened cognitive associations across languages, helping students build a more integrated understanding of vocabulary and concepts. By drawing on familiar linguistic resources, teachers reduced the cognitive load of processing new information in Arabic (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; Alsalami, 2025).

This scaffolding aligns with educational theories that emphasise the importance of building on prior knowledge. In multilingual classrooms, learners' existing linguistic repertoires are not obstacles but resources for understanding. Code-switching activated this prior knowledge and made abstract or unfamiliar concepts more accessible. It therefore worked as a bridge between what learners already knew and what they were expected to learn.

Teachers used code-switching strategically rather than randomly. Interviews with instructors indicated that they usually began instruction in Arabic to maximise exposure to the target language. When students showed confusion or difficulty, they shifted to Bahasa Indonesia or English for clarification before returning to Arabic practice. This flexible pattern balanced exposure with comprehension: sustained Arabic input remained important, but it became meaningful only when learners could follow the lesson.

This practice reflects a responsive pedagogical approach in which teachers adjust instruction to students' needs and reactions. By observing verbal and non-verbal cues, such as confusion, hesitation, or lack of participation, teachers made real-time decisions about whether to continue in Arabic or introduce other languages. Such adaptability helped learners remain engaged and able to follow the lesson.

Code-switching also fostered participation. Excessive use of Arabic without support sometimes led to silence and reduced engagement. When learners did not understand the language of instruction, they were less likely to ask questions or contribute to classroom activities. Strategic

code-switching lowered these barriers and created a more inclusive environment in which students could express ideas, request clarification, and join discussion.

This interactional function was linked to affect. Language learning involves anxiety, confidence, and motivation as well as cognition. Familiar languages gave students an anchor in moments of difficulty and reduced the pressure to perform perfectly in Arabic. This increased their willingness to participate. The finding aligns with research on pedagogical translanguaging, foreign language emotions, and reduced classroom anxiety (Cenoz et al., 2024; Dewaele et al., 2018).

Code-switching further supported inclusivity and collaborative learning. Students entered the classroom with different linguistic backgrounds and Arabic proficiency levels. By incorporating multiple languages into instruction, teachers made the content more accessible and created space for shared understanding. Students could support one another, exchange explanations, and co-construct knowledge through interaction.

These results challenge monolingual ideologies that require exclusive use of the target language in foreign language classrooms. Such ideologies assume that maximum target-language exposure produces better learning outcomes. In multilingual contexts, however, strict language separation may create barriers to comprehension, increase anxiety, and reduce participation, especially among learners with lower proficiency.

The findings instead support perspectives that view multilingual practice as pedagogically useful when guided by clear purposes. Translanguaging-oriented approaches value learners' full linguistic repertoires as resources for learning and can promote deeper understanding, stronger engagement, and more meaningful participation. Recent scholarship likewise argues that translanguaging can support cognitive and social dimensions of language learning when it is shaped by responsive teacher agency (An, 2024; Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021; Fang et al., 2022; Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; Phyak et al., 2022; Tai & Wei, 2021).

Nevertheless, code-switching needs principled management. Although it can support comprehension and interaction, excessive reliance on non-target languages may reduce opportunities for meaningful Arabic exposure. Teachers therefore need to use code-switching selectively for specific learning needs while maintaining a clear focus on Arabic proficiency development (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022).

This balance is especially important in Arabic language teaching because Arabic is associated not only with communication but also with religious knowledge and scholarly tradition. Learners are expected to develop familiarity with its structures and uses, yet the complexity of Arabic requires pedagogical flexibility. Studies of Arabic and LOTE classrooms show that multilingual and multimodal resources can support alphabetic learning, teacher explanation, and learner participation when used intentionally (An, 2024; Kawafha & Al Masaeed, 2023). Strategic code-switching can therefore help learners manage these challenges while progressing toward Arabic proficiency (Al Tale' & AlQahtani, 2022; Alsalami, 2025).

Taken as a whole, the pedagogical evidence supports selective and purposeful code-switching in multilingual Arabic classrooms. It worked as scaffolding, a tool for managing instruction, and a

social resource for engagement and inclusion. Arabic instruction should therefore move beyond rigid monolingual assumptions and adopt translanguaging-informed pedagogy that values learners' linguistic diversity while keeping Arabic proficiency as the central goal.

Conclusion

This study examined how code-switching emerges in multilingual Arabic classrooms and how it contributes to students' linguistic identities. Learners shifted among Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, English, and local languages to manage comprehension, clarify meaning, and sustain interaction. These shifts were purposeful rather than random. Teachers also used code-switching strategically as scaffolding, showing its pedagogical role in supporting understanding and engagement.

Code-switching also shaped identity negotiation. Arabic was associated with academic achievement, religious affiliation, and social prestige, while Bahasa Indonesia provided emotional comfort and supported participation. This duality shows that learners' identities were fluid and shaped through interaction. Translanguaging practices further indicate that learners integrated multiple linguistic resources to construct meaning, supporting the view of multilingual competence as a unified repertoire rather than a set of separate systems.

Pedagogically, the study suggests that rigid monolingual approaches are less effective in multilingual Arabic classrooms. Selective code-switching and translanguaging can strengthen comprehension, reduce anxiety, and encourage active participation when they are used to support, rather than replace, Arabic proficiency development. The study is limited to one institutional context and a relatively small sample. Future research should examine similar practices across different settings and trace the long-term development of learners' linguistic identities. Overall, multilingualism should be recognised as a valuable resource in Arabic learning because it can support both language development and learner identity formation.

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