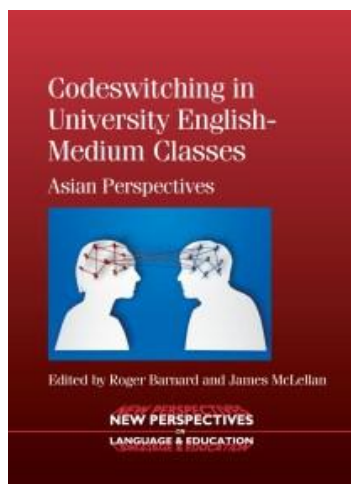


## Codeswitching in University English-Medium Classes

In December the major UK publishing house Multilingual Matters published *Codeswitching in University English-Medium Classes*, edited by Roger Barnard (The University of Waikato, Aotearoa/New Zealand) and James McLellan (ELAL, FASS, UBD). Here, the editors outline the main themes of the book and how the research was undertaken.



The central theme of this book is the use of the students' first language as well as the target language (i.e. codeswitching, language alternation, also called 'translanguaging') in English language classrooms.

Educational methodologists and policy-makers in many countries often insist on the exclusive use of the target language, believing that this presents the best (sometimes the only) way that students will experience the language being used. On the other hand, a number of influential scholars (among them, Guy Cook, Vivian Cook, Glenn Levine, and Ernesto Macaro) have argued that denying the use of a common first language is detrimental to students' educational, as well as linguistic, development.

The research undertaken for this book sought to uncover the codeswitching practices and beliefs of university teachers of English-medium classes in twenty contexts across Asia. The authors of the case studies recorded and transcribed language lessons in their particular context, and calculated the amount of time spent on the students' first language and the pedagogical functions served by this switching from English. Subsequently, they interviewed the teachers concerned to elicit their reasons for codeswitching, or not codeswitching. Each case study was commented on by a researcher in another context, often adding further examples from their own research.

It was found that the use of students' first language was an entirely normal practice everywhere, usually for between 6 and 15% of the talking time, and that teachers provided very cogent reasons for their codeswitching practices, primarily with the needs and interests of their students at heart. These findings may well resonate with teachers in other geographical contexts and in different institutions, such as elementary and high schools.

The main implication that can be drawn from these case studies – and the valuable introductory and concluding chapters – is that it is unwise to impose a monolingual policy in language classrooms. Rather, teachers should be entitled to use all the linguistic resources available to them and their students in order to negotiate for meaning and to promote language learning. This is especially so in English-language classrooms where teacher and students share a common first language, e.g. Vietnamese, Thai, Filipino or Malay.

Readers in Brunei Darussalam will be especially interested in the case study in chapter 6, co-authored by the former and current directors of the UBD Language Centre and several of their colleagues.

For further information about the book, please refer to the publisher's website:

<http://www.multilingual-matters.com/display.asp?isbn=9781783090891>